

## **Exploring wellbeing in yarn-based amateur craftswomen who make alone and share online**

MAYNE, Alison <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1562-9368>>

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# EXPLORING WELLBEING IN YARN-BASED AMATEUR CRAFTSWOMEN WHO MAKE ALONE AND SHARE ONLINE

Alison Elizabeth Mayne

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2018





## CANDIDATE STATEMENT

I, Alison Elizabeth Mayne, declare that the enclosed submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy and consisting of a written thesis, meets the regulations stated in the handbook for the mode of submission selected and approved by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee of Sheffield Hallam University.

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other academic award. The use of all materials from sources other than my own work has been properly and fully acknowledged.



## ABSTRACT

This qualitative, interpretive study explores women's views on the impact that amateur knit or crochet and the sharing of such making through the social media platform Facebook™ has on their subjective wellbeing.

Focus within the Academy on textiles made by women amateurs is limited, as is explicit study of the impact knit or crochet may have on subjective perceptions of wellbeing – a concept which itself is associated with contentious definitions. The ways in which amateur yarn-crafters connect in Facebook™ groups to share their making is a significantly under-researched area: Recent studies have begun to address the benefits as well as drawbacks of engagement in digital communities, whilst identifying gaps in understanding its use by mature women.

To facilitate this ethnographic research, a 'closed' Facebook™ group was created where participants could engage with the researcher. Thematic coding was used to support the analysis of the data consisting of threads generated by questions posed by the researcher, alongside discussions and questions created by participants.

Findings confirmed that both making in knit or crochet and sharing within a Facebook™ group contributed to feelings of connection and community, but also could exacerbate loneliness; making could help engage participants in a worthwhile activity, but could also lead to frustration; there was joy in giving to others, but conflicting emotions about keeping yarn for the self; negative impacts on feelings of wellbeing were shared, illustrating how amateur making could also lead to physical pain and emotionally destructive thinking.

Several contributions to knowledge are claimed: The method of using Facebook™ as both a platform for gathering and the topic of data contributes to debate on the ethics of participation; The thesis offers an exploration of some of the ways the haptic, tactile nature of making by hand is articulated and mediated through digital means in a Facebook™ group; Most significantly, alongside its confirmation of positive benefits, the study presents the negative impact amateur making in knit and crochet may have on subjective perceptions of wellbeing.



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Mayne, A. (2017). Making Myself Well: Participant collaboration in 'Woolly Wellbeing Reflection Boxes'. In *Intersections: Collaborations in Textile Design Research Conference*, 13 September 2017, Loughborough University London UK. Retrieved from [http://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/external/content/schoolsanddepartments/aed/downloads/Mayne\\_INTERSECTIONS2017.pdf](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/media/wwwlboroacuk/external/content/schoolsanddepartments/aed/downloads/Mayne_INTERSECTIONS2017.pdf)



## CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY	1
1.1.1	Key Questions	3
1.2	CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	4
1.3	CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	4
1.3.1	Perceptions of Subjective Wellbeing	5
1.3.2	Amateur Women Makers	7
1.3.3	Sharing on Facebook™	8
1.4	PRIDE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS	10
1.5	LIMITATIONS AND BOUNDARIES	11
1.5.1	Location of the Researcher	12
1.5.2	Boundaries of the Study	12
1.6	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	14
1.7	SHAPE OF THE STUDY	14
	<i>A 'Woolly Wellbeing' story - Alison</i>	18
<b>2</b>	<b>CONTEXTUAL REVIEW</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1	WELLBEING	20
2.1.1	Some Key Definitions	21
2.1.2	Wellbeing and Arts Therapies in the UK	24
2.1.3	Women's Wellbeing – Research in Art and Making Therapies	28
2.1.4	Wellbeing in Textile Making	29
2.1.5	Wellbeing through Knit and Crochet	32
2.1.5.1	Knit and crochet: The tactile	33
2.1.5.2	Knit and crochet: Slow pace in leisure time	33
2.1.5.3	Knit and crochet: Agency and empowerment	34
2.1.5.4	Social connection	35
2.1.6	Summary	36
2.2	WOMEN'S AMATEUR MAKING	37
2.2.1	The Amateur Craft Maker	37
2.2.2	Women's Amateur Craft Making	39
2.2.2.1	Women's work in knit and crochet	42
2.2.2.2	Knit and crochet for others	44
2.2.2.3	Knit and crochet for the self	45



2.2.3	Summary	46
2.3	RESEARCHING THE DIGITAL EVERYDAY	47
2.3.1	Making Spaces in Digital Places	47
2.3.1.1	Making space on Facebook™	50
2.3.2	Wellbeing in Digital Spaces	51
2.3.2.1	Wellbeing and social network use for those with mental health issues	53
2.3.2.2	Facebook™ and wellbeing	53
2.3.3	Amateur Making in Small Digital Spaces	55
2.3.4	Summary	60
2.4	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	60
<b>3</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY AND METHODS</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1	PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH	65
3.1.1	Social Constructivism	65
3.1.1.1	The influence of Constructivist Grounded Theory strategies	66
3.1.2	Interpretivism	67
3.1.2.1	The knotty problem of measurement	68
3.1.3	A Feminist Mindset	70
3.1.4	Summary	71
3.2	RESEARCH DESIGN	72
3.2.1	Why Ethnography	72
3.2.2	Ethnography in Digital Settings	75
3.2.3	Visual Ethnography	77
3.2.4	Summary	79
3.3	ETHICS IN DIGITAL SETTINGS	79
3.3.1	Summary	81
3.4	DATA COLLECTION	82
3.4.1	Why Facebook™	82
3.4.2	Engagement and Participation	84
3.4.2.1	Participants statistics	85
3.4.2.2	Participant engagements	86
3.4.2.3	Engaged voices	89
3.4.3	Summary	90
3.5	DATA ANALYSIS	91
3.5.1	Why Coding	91



3.5.2	Coding Phases	92
3.5.3	Qualitative Thematic Analysis	94
3.5.4	Summary	95
3.6	ON REFLEXIVITY	96
3.7	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	98
<b>4</b>	<b>PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS</b>	<b>101</b>
	<i>A Woolly Wellbeing Story - RL</i>	104
4.1	VIEWS ON ETHICS AND PARTICIPATION IN DIGITAL RESEARCH	105
	<i>A Woolly Wellbeing Story - BB</i>	107
4.2	WHAT WELLBEING MEANS FOR PARTICIPANTS	108
	<i>A Woolly Wellbeing Story - JH</i>	111
4.3	SOCIAL CONNECTIONS	112
4.3.1	Making and Sharing on Facebook	112
4.3.2	Connection Through Shared Interest	114
4.3.3	Connections with Family Members	116
	<i>A Woolly Wellbeing Story - DJ</i>	119
4.4	AGENCY	120
4.4.1	Being Agentic in Finding Ways to Comfort the Self	120
4.4.1.1	Deliberate acts of self-care	123
4.4.1.2	Self-identified therapy	124
4.4.2	Giving and Gifting	126
4.4.2.1	Activism	126
4.4.2.2	Making for charity	127
4.4.2.3	Making for loved ones	129
4.4.2.4	Making for the self	130
4.4.3	Learning and Creativity	132
4.4.3.1	Seeking and giving advice	132
4.4.3.2	Praising others	134
4.4.3.3	Joy in learning	135
4.4.3.4	Using time productively	136
4.4.4	Creativity	138
4.4.4.1	Beauty in colour	138
4.4.4.3	Creativity and ‘painting with yarn’	140
4.4.4.4	The joy of stash	142



	<i>A Woolly Wellbeing Story - PK</i>	144
4.5	“FIBER CANNOT FIX EVERYTHING”: THE DARK SIDE OF KNIT AND CROCHET FOR WELLBEING	145
4.5.1	Physical Pain	145
4.5.2	Emotional Pain	147
4.5.2.1	Distress	148
4.5.2.2	Loneliness	150
4.5.2.3	Self-doubt and self-criticism	152
4.5.2.4	The pain of stash	153
	<i>A Woolly Wellbeing Story - GS</i>	157
4.6	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	158
<b>5</b>	<b>DISCUSSION</b>	<b>160</b>
5.1	ENGAGING WITH DIGITAL RESEARCH	161
5.1.1	Engagement Through the Platform	161
5.1.2	Engagement and Safety	162
5.1.3	Engagement and Community Building	164
5.2	MAKING AS HAPTIC / AS DIGITAL	166
5.2.1	Working with The Hand to Support Wellbeing	166
5.2.2	The Tactile in Domestic Space	168
5.2.3	The Digital as A Space for Making	170
5.2.4	Digital Articulation of Making	172
5.3	MAKING CONNECTIONS	174
5.3.1	Connecting with Other Makers	174
5.3.2	Connecting in Age	176
5.3.3	A Caveat About Caring Connections	180
5.3.4	Connecting with The Self	181
5.4	THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVITY	182
5.4.1	The Impact of ‘Being Creative’	183
5.4.2	Why Everyday Creativity?	184
5.4.2.1	The ‘problem’ with everyday creativity	185
5.4.3	Knit and Crochet As A Way To ‘Be Creative’	186
5.5	THE NEED FOR NUANCE: NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS IN KNIT AND CROCHET FOR WELLBEING	187
5.6	CHAPTER CONCLUSION	190
<b>6</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>193</b>



6.1	A REVIEW	193
6.1.2	Review of Literature from Chapter Two	193
6.1.3	Reflections on Method from Chapter Three	195
6.1.4	Review of Findings from Chapter Four	196
6.1.5	Review of Discussion from Chapter Five	197
6.2	REFLECTIONS ON LIMITATIONS IN THE STUDY	198
6.3	KEY CONTRIBUTIONS	199
6.3.1	Unforeseen Contributions: Understanding the ethics of participatory research located in digital space	199
6.3.2	Contributions Responding to the Question ‘What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?’	201
6.3.2.1	Understanding connections between knit, crochet and supporting subjective perceptions of wellbeing	201
6.3.2.2	Understanding links between knit, crochet and negative implications for wellbeing	202
6.3.3	Contributions Responding to the Question: ‘What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?’	204
6.4	IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK	205
6.5	THREADING A WAY BACK TO THE START	207
<b>REFERENCES</b>		<b>210</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>		
A.1a	Glossary I – Social Media Terms	I
A.1b	Glossary II – Knit and Crochet Terms	III
A.2	Participation Call	VI
A.3	Woolly Wellbeing Research Group Research Questions	VII
A.4	All Other Researcher Interactions in Facebook Group	XV
A.5	Participant Identifiers and Interactions	XLVIII
A.6	Thanks To the Women Who Engaged In The Woolly Wellbeing Research Group	LIII
A.7	Participant Information and Consent Documents	LIV
A.8	Text to Guard Against Trolling Behaviours	LVIII
A.9	Research Question ‘Word Clouds’	LXI
A.10a	Expanded Illustrative Evidence - Text	LXXII
A.10b	Expanded Illustrative Evidence - Images	XCVII





From The Knitter, by Jackie Kay	CVII
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<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>
------------------------

Figure 1	Map showing geographical breakdown of membership	85
Figure 2	Breakdown of participant engagement	87
Figure 3	Range of engagement	88
Figure 4	Voices of engaged participants	89
Figure 5	Example of Word Cloud: Sharing making on social media	95
Figure 6	Image posted by SB	109
Figure 7	Image posted by AKK	113
Figure 8	Image posted by KW	115
Figure 9	Image posted by JE	118
Figure 10	Image posted by CR	122
Figure 11	Image posted by AM4	125
Figure 12	Image posted by RL	127
Figure 13	Image posted by GS	128
Figure 14	Image posted by MM6	130
Figure 15	Image posted by KC	132
Figure 16	Image posted by CW	133
Figure 17	Word Cloud illustrating praise words	135
Figure 18	Image posted by KM	136
Figure 19	Image posted by LJ	140
Figure 20	Image posted by JB	141
Figure 21	Image posted by CB2	143
Figure 22	Image posted by NG	147
Figure 23	Image posted by MF	150
Figure 24	Image posted by JM	152
Figure 25	Image posted by WP	156



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## GLOSSARY

This may also be found in Appendix 1

### Glossary I: Social Media Terms

Blog	A portmanteau of 'web-log': personal or business site with content based on regular articles, think pieces or video; may also be used as a verb 'to blog'
Blogger	An individual who maintains a blog
Bump	To comment on a thread in order to bring the post to the top of the group timeline
Chat	One-to-one communication using a 'back-channel' route, such as personal, direct or instant messaging
Closed group	A group where posts and comments may only be observed by those within it, rather than being seen on personal timelines. Members of a closed group may 'join' it, rather than becoming 'friends' (see below) with others
Comment	A response reacting to another's post
Facebook™	Social media platform founded in 2004, designed to connect people and share content
Flaming	Disruptive, controversial or harmful content designed to cause distress (see also 'Trolling'); term used more in US settings
Friend	An individual with whom a personal connection is made on Facebook: Unlike a one-sided 'following' of an organisation or business, social media friendship is bi-lateral as both parties need to agree to it; after this, friends may see each other's personal timeline
Instagram™	Social media network founded on 2010 and now owned by Facebook, designed to share photographs; posts can also be shared across other social networks
Like	An action through clicking an icon below a post or comment to quickly indicate a response e.g. a 'thumbs up' for like, 'heart' for love; laughter, distress and anger are also possible reactions



Lurker	A member of a group who may read discussions but who does not directly interact through 'liking', commenting or posting
Platform	Web 2.0 (see below) technology which supports social media content sharing across different sites and of different types, eg text, still and moving image
Post	A social media platform 'update', where an individual provides content; this may stand alone or develop into a thread (see below)
Secret group	Similar to a closed group, but with added security measures so that the group cannot be found through searching and invitations to join the group are not made on personal timelines
Social Media System	Similar to 'Social Network Site' (below) but enhanced by additional applications which allow generation and / or sharing of other web-based content
Social Network Site	An online platform used to connect people and help build social relations through creating a profile – often based on employment or topics of personal interest
Thread	A series of comments or replies to a post, which may form a conversation between individuals or be a series of communications from the original poster
Timeline	Feed of posts on a personal account, which may comprise of public posts, sponsored content, posts from 'friends' and groups to which the individual belongs
Trolling	Disruptive, controversial or harmful content designed to cause distress; also 'troll' is the person creating the content (see also 'Flaming')
Twitter™	Social media network founded in 2006, designed to allow users to share short updates as well as images and links to other web content
Web 2.0	Progression of early, static affordances of the World Wide Web, to support collaboration and dynamic sharing of content generated by users

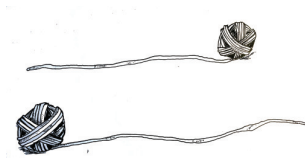


## Glossary II: Knit and Crochet Terms

CAL	Crochet-Along: a group activity where participants make the same design in an agreed time frame. This may be using a complete pattern or one which is released in instalments
Crojo	Shortening of 'crochet mojo' (see below): A motivation to make, or belief in one's ability to make in crochet
DPNS	Double Pointed Needles: used in groups of four or five to knit fabric in the round
Entrelac	Specific knitting or crochet technique which creates an interwoven, textured pattern of diamonds or squares, with stitches oriented in different directions
Frog	To undo or take back knit or crochet where there has been a mistake – also called 'ripping out' as 'rip it, rip it' creates the connection to 'frog'. (See also 'Tink')
Gauge	Measurement for tension in constructed yarn fabric, e.g. to create accurate sizing in garments: Dimensions are calculated by number and height of stitches per row e.g. 18 stitches and 24 rows in a 4 inch or 10 cm square
Hook	Vernacular term for crochet, which uses a hook rather than needles.
Hooker	Vernacular term for crochet makers, often used informally and humorously
Hot off the hook (or needles)	Vernacular phrase for a knit or crochet item which has just been finished
KAL	Knit-Along: a group activity where participants make the same design in an agreed time frame. This may be using a complete pattern or one which is released in instalments
Mojo	A motivation to make, or belief in one's ability to make – playing on original etymology related to charm or spell
NCR / NKR	'Off-topic' posts and comments on a group page which are 'not crochet related' or 'not knitting related'
Noro	A specific brand of luxury yarn from Japan



Ravelry	A community social network forum operating since 2007, where yarn-crafters can source patterns, post completed projects, find information about yarn and join specialist groups led by area, interest, designers, bloggers etc. <a href="http://www.ravelry.com">www.ravelry.com</a> has over seven million members. (Also referred to as 'Rav')
Self-striping	A specialised form of yarn – e.g. for socks – which is dyed to create distinct stripes of colour if knit or crochet to a specific gauge
Stash	Vernacular term for collected or stored yarn, not yet made into a finished item
Subbed	Shortened term for 'substituted', where a different yarn than one suggested in a pattern has been chosen
Tension	Another term for 'gauge' above, a measure of dimensions in knit or crochet fabric
Tink	To undo or take back knitting where there has been a mistake – i.e., to 'knit' backwards. (See also 'Frog')
Tunisian	Specific crochet technique originating in the Mediterranean – this uses a specific crochet hook which is longer than usual, possibly extended with a flexible cable
Twiddlemuff	A tube or lap mat constructed with different weights and textures of yarn and decorated with items to occupy the hands – a popular charity project as the items are used for people with Dementias or and Autism diagnoses
WIP	Shortened term for 'work-in-progress': an unfinished knit or crochet object
Yarn	Spun textile thread in variety of weights or thicknesses (cobweb, lace, 4-ply or fingering, double-knit, aran or worsted, chunky or bulky) made from any source material from acrylic to alpaca or bamboo. Only yarn from sheep is called 'wool'
Yarn-bomb	Vernacular term for the large-scale decoration of public space using knit or crochet items: This may be for socially activist or celebratory purposes



## 1. INTRODUCTION

*Cast On: create stitches on needle to begin*

knitting soothes the troubled spirit, and it doesn't hurt the untroubled  
spirit either

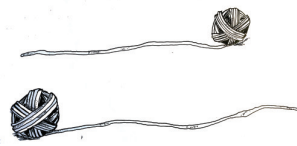
(Zimmerman, 1971/1995, p.2)

The calming, maternal voice of American knitwear designer and writer Elizabeth Zimmerman expresses here the commonly held belief that yarn hand craft has an almost magical capacity to support wellbeing: This belief may be as ubiquitous as the stereotype of a happy 'knitting nana' with little more to interest her than to whip up a cardigan for a grandchild. However, the experience of women amateur makers (of all ages) who use knit and crochet as part of sustaining their wellbeing is far more complex.

Like the act of hand craft itself, the idea that making in yarn is beneficial for wellbeing has become so widely accepted as to be obvious - so 'everyday' that a clear understanding of what specifically these benefits are or how they manifest has been largely bypassed (Lampitt Adey, 2018; Turney, 2009). A more nuanced examination is needed to consider how knit and crochet may contribute to perceptions of subjective wellbeing in women amateur makers. In addition, for many women with access to the internet, the documentation and sharing of making on digital platforms – of process and as completed product - has become an integrated, embedded practice (Orton Johnson, 2014a; 2014b). Therefore, an exploration of how making in knit and crochet for wellbeing may be mediated through sharing on a digital social media platform is timely.

### 1.1. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this PhD study is to consider women amateur makers in knit and crochet and their perceptions of how crafting by hand with yarn has an impact on their sense of subjective wellbeing as they make alone and share on the digital social media platform Facebook™. Theirs are voices which are not frequently heard in the Academy,

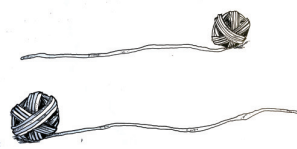


with studies on textile crafts tending to focus on the professional artist rather than the hobbyist developing skills for leisure purposes (Hackney, Maughan and Desmarais, 2016) or on the use of hand crafts as a method of improving subjective wellbeing in those with specific physical or mental illnesses (Hunt, Nikopoulous-Smyrni and Reynolds, 2014; Reynolds, 1997; 2004). Some studies already exist on wellbeing through knit and crochet, such as the Stitchlinks project undertaken by Corkhill, Hemmings, Maddock and Riley (2014) - which focused exclusively on the wellbeing impact of what was termed ‘therapeutic knitting’ - or the more recent Lampitt Adey (2018) article investigating motivating factors for women engaging in knit or crochet as they seek calm, creativity and ‘flow’. However, where and how the “inherent” (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.36) soothing or uplifting benefits of these practices have an impact on wellbeing still needs to be evaluated further (Lampitt Adey, 2018; Riley, Corkhill and Morris, 2013).

This research is also an opportunity to develop understanding of the everyday practices which combine the haptic and hand made with the intangible elements in sharing with a digital community (Orton-Johnson, 2014a; 2014b). There is space in current literature to explore how the ubiquity and embeddedness of social media use could enhance subjective perceptions of wellbeing as making in knit or crochet is documented and shared with others. Some studies acknowledge how participants engage with digital communities linked to textile hand crafts, but do not explore specific groups or those located on Facebook™ (Myzelev, 2009; Prigoda and MacKenzie, 2007) where there are hundreds of knit and crochet groups with membership in the tens of thousands (Mayne, 2016b).

Using a social media platform to engage, communicate with and elicit data from participants is also a deliberate response to calls from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to explore the “ethics and ontologies of participation and collaboration... via digital networks” (Armstrong, Bailey, Julier and Kimbell, 2014, p.58) and consider where an online creative arts community has a contribution to make in building meaningful social relationships (Johnston, Chen and Hauman, 2013) which can support and empower (Jetten, Haslam, J., Haslam, C., Dingle and Jones, 2014). It also contributes to necessary debate about the uses of social media platforms by women, particularly those of mature years (Miller et al., 2016).





For this ethnographic, inductive research, women amateur craft makers' opinions and experiences of wellbeing, connectedness, creativity, challenges and sharing have been facilitated through the creation of a closed Facebook™ group entitled 'Woolly Wellbeing Research', designed to engage participants in expressing their views. Facebook™ is a social media platform which offers connection to others in digital space: As well as viewing and posting on a personal page or timeline, the platform offers the opportunity to join public groups of interest which can be viewed by all, or closed groups where material does not appear on personal timelines and only the membership can read and contribute (Facebook™, 2015).

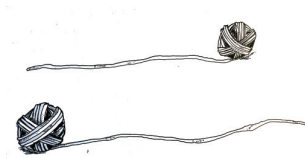
Data was collected in an eighteen-month period between February 2015 and August 2016 from 407 active participants within a group membership of 526. These participants shared over 1000 posts and responded with over 4500 comments. Many supported the message that making with yarn in knit and crochet, often combined with the opportunity to share making through a social media platform, contributed to wellbeing in a powerful way. However, with a multi-vocal study such as this, in addition to the popular notion that these practices were 'life saving', there were also more complex and nuanced views. Unpacking these complexities is the work of this thesis.

### 1.1.1. Key Questions

Two key, linked questions were formulated to explore how women amateur makers' perceptions of subjective wellbeing may be impacted by the practices of making in yarn with knit and crochet and in sharing such making to Facebook™.

The research questions are

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?
- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?



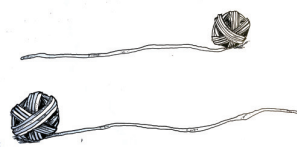
## 1.2.CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

The original contributions to knowledge offered by this project can be found in the intersections of researching women amateur makers, their perspectives on how knit and crochet affects their feelings of wellbeing and the impact on wellbeing of sharing textiles in a digital space on Facebook™ - all significantly under-researched areas. The study brings together a critical understanding of literature from a number of fields from occupational therapy, to amateur art practice and sociology. It employs a range of research methods, which are both established (for example in participant-observation) and more innovative, such as the use of a digital artefact to source data. The aspect of amateur makers weaving both created object and social connections in a digital space is under-researched, with the locus of some aspects of the study positioned on Facebook™ being particularly unusual. The project therefore also seeks to contribute to the developing field of digital sociology, especially with regard to participant views on the ethics of research using a Facebook™ closed group.

This study contributes depth to existing knowledge in considering situated participant views on how knit and crochet positively influence their perceptions of wellbeing. Research in the area of wellbeing and yarn crafts is still limited, and the study seeks to contribute to a growing body of work which investigates how wellbeing may be supported through specific occupations. The research begins to address limitations in existing literature by exploring the connection between positive subjective wellbeing and electing to make alone. Most significantly, this study highlights the potential for knit and crochet to have a *negative* impact on perceptions of wellbeing for some participants. If amateur yarn craft is seen as potent in its capacity to affect especially mental health wellbeing, there must be a greater understanding of the ways that knit and crochet practice may also open a space for emotional pain or distress, frustration and self-criticism, which could also have a powerful influence on amateur makers' wellbeing.

## 1.3. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

There is a meditative meaningfulness in making for many women amateurs who engage in hand crafts when alone and there is rich cultural knowledge exchange and

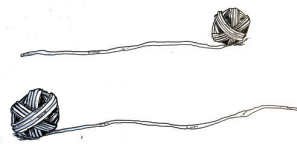


community-building facilitated through person-centred technologies (Gauntlett, 2011; McLuhan and Fiore, 1967). This research focuses on the impact that making in yarn, shared in these communities, may have on wellbeing – but what warrant is there for considering these areas?

### 1.3.1. Perceptions of Subjective Wellbeing

The multiple views on what ‘wellbeing’ means is a significant challenge in working within this study. Dooris, Farrier and Froggett (2018) consider the word ‘unruly’ in its meaning, which may be required to encompass wellness for individuals alongside definitions related to policy justifications and economic measurement. The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognised the significance of wellbeing from its inception, considering it an holistic state beyond physical health (WHO, 2018a) and embedded in everyday practices (WHO, 2014). The New Economics Foundation (NEF, 2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011) criteria for ‘Five Ways to Wellbeing’ provided an initial framework for research questions and participant discussion in this study. These elements – to connect, stay active, keep learning, take notice and give incorporate concepts such as absorption and ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992/2000) in creativity, purpose and connectedness (Ings, Crane and Cameron, 2012), but are not entangled with indicators related to economics or employment (Berry, 2014).

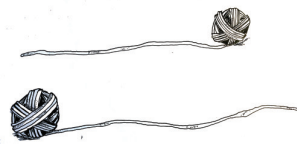
Whilst occupation, often in the arts, has been a long-standing feature of healthcare for over a hundred years, from the nineteenth century ‘moral’ treatment of the mentally ill and changes in practice following the First World War (Hocking, 2010; Paterson, 2008) to current care for veterans of conflicts in the Middle East (Foote, Bulger, Frampton and Pellegrino, 2012), it has only had a formal place in policy making in the last forty years or so (Stickley and Hui, 2012a; 2012b). Participation in the arts was considered to support emotional wellbeing through promoting agency, social connectedness or resilience (Clift, et al, 2009) and has seen its most recent focus in the report commissioned by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts in Health and Wellbeing Inquiry (APPGAHW, 2017a). This has emphasised the need to explore the potential of creative practices to improve outcomes in key health challenges such as mental healthcare, social isolation and some of the complex implications of ageing.



Women's amateur making as a therapeutic practice has been the focus of numerous studies. These highlight the ways that creative making can enhance older women's feelings of agency and positivity or relaxation (Liddle, Parkinson and Sibbritt, 2013), especially in navigating biographical disruption (Reynolds, Vivat and Prior, 2008) or in the ways women may meet the challenges of specific medical conditions (Czamanski-Cohen and Weihs, 2014; Singh, 2011). Research into wellbeing benefits of art-based therapies for younger, healthy women is limited (Titus and Sinacore, 2013), although the few studies there are suggest social connectedness and promotion of self-esteem as outcomes.

When looking at studies into wellbeing through textile hand crafts, benefits have been reported as including reflection and relaxation in times of stress (Grace, Gandolfo and Candy, 2009), learning through social interaction (Maidment and MacFarlane, 2011) and increasing social connectedness (Schofield-Tomschin and Littrell, 2001). This pattern can also be observed in Kenning's (2015) work with older lace makers, Burt and Atkinson's (2012) study with older quilters, which both highlighted social connection and support as a key factor and Reynolds' (2000) work on needle crafting for participants with mental health difficulties, where relaxation and contemplation supported recovery. Futterman-Collier (2011) offers an interesting perspective in researching women with anxiety, finding that those who already engaged in amateur craft reported that they were able to manage their symptoms effectively specifically because they used textile work to help them cope.

The specific contribution that knit and crochet may make to subjective wellbeing can be found in the 'Stitchlinks' study (Corkhill et al., 2014; Riley et al., 2013) on 'therapeutic knitting'. This found that resilience, a sense of agency and distraction from anxiety or pain were potential outcomes for participants, although these benefits were seen as inherent in the practice of rhythmic, repetitive knitting and perhaps need to be further unpacked. These may include the soothing nature of working with a soft, warm fabric (Turney, 2012; Shreeve, 1998), making agentic choices (Corkhill et al., 2014), enhancing social connections (Turney, 2009), providing a calming space which allows for making at a slow pace (Myzelev, 2009) and an opportunity for quiet reflection (Hackney, 2013a; 2013b; Hackney et al., 2016).



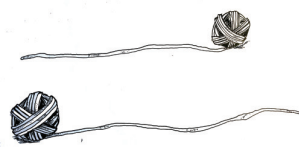
The work of this study makes a contribution through confirming the positive impact on wellbeing which knit and crochet may offer amateur makers but deepens understanding through exploring how this may be identified in the digital location of a Facebook™ group. It also challenges the dominant thinking of assumed beneficial effects gained through engaging in yarn craft and offers a more nuanced perspective on potentially challenging or negative impacts for makers.

### 1.3.2. Amateur Women Makers

Study on amateur craft making can be viewed as contentious, often associated with a lack of creativity exemplified by the disparaging nineteenth century image of a Pooterish bore (Grossmith and Grossmith, 1892/1999), faddishly painting his bath with red enamel. Some writers on contemporary craft makers express similar concerns about quality and discrediting of the arts (Adamson, 2007), whilst others maintain a view that serious hobbyism can be fulfilling and enriching (Merrifield, 2017; Stebbins, 2007; 2015). Sennett (2009) claims that the most significant craft work operates on a largely professional level, with its pinnacle as a loss of the self through dedicated focus on the object – the product, not the process is what is of interest. In contrast, Gauntlett (2011) celebrates embodied making where the process of creating by hand can be personally transformative.

Women's amateur making, often constructed in softer textile and crafted within and for a domestic setting has a long history of being marginalised and devalued (Dalton, 1987; Parker, 1984/2010). Adoption of hand crafts within the early movements of women's suffrage (Parker, 1984/2010), in the second wave feminist movement (Adamson, 2007) and more recently (Black, 2017; Black and Burisch, 2009) has been perceived as a way of acknowledging and challenging notions of subjugation. It has also been used as a short-hand illustration of the boundaried nature of some women's domestic lives and as a marker for the lack of creativity in such a circumscribed life (Dalton, 1987).

However, there is also a growing area of study which considers the creative hand craft of women amateurs who may engage in making for many, nuanced reasons as part of their everyday practice (Hackney, 2013b; Hackney et al., 2016; Stannard and Sanders,

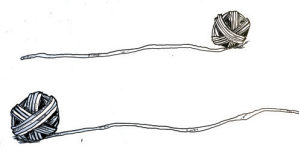


2015). This includes a more reflective view on making in knit and crochet previously overlooked in academic discourse (Black, 2012; Hemmings, 2010). Much of this has been an examination of knit and crochet makers working in physical groups in order to feel connected to a textile tradition and to each other (Prigoda and McKenzie, 2007; Schofield-Thomson and Littrell, 2001) or to build confidence and creativity (Lampitt Adey, 2018; Stannard and Sanders, 2015). Some work has focused on the collaborative work of knit and crochet amateur makers engaging in social activism (Chansky, 2010; Polley, 2014) and resistance (Greer, 2014; Springgay, 2010). In contrast, more recent studies have begun to explore what the motivations may be for the 'quiet' (Hackney, 2013a; Shercliff, 2015) maker who works 'invisibly' for charity, family or themselves. These studies begin to unpick how amateur hand craft can support meditative practices, self-esteem and personal pleasure (Fisk, 2012; Hackney et al., 2016) rather than a craft activity which is always performed for the benefit of others. This research contributes to the growing conversation on this subject.

### 1.3.3. Sharing on Facebook™

This research is located in and reflects on the social media platform Facebook™, as every day millions of amateurs share their making in digital groups on the platform, either as completed objects or as works in progress. Groups like this offer support through making together and sharing projects and uses the connectivity of digital communities to communicate with thousands of like-minded hand crafters interested in knit and crochet across geographical boundaries and time zones (Mayne, 2016b). Part of what this thesis explores is how amateur makers use sharing to a digital platform as an embedded practice – not separate from their physical lives, but helping to sustain wellbeing (Horst and Miller, 2013; Lichti-Harriman, 2012a) through articulating and documenting creativity in yarn craft (Orton-Johnson, 2014b).

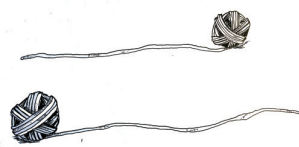
Whilst there is a contrary view, based on concern about individualism and a fractured society where physical communities are distanced from one another through engaging on social media platforms (Carr, 2010; Turkle, 2011), research which sees positivity in digital communities is relatively well established: Baym (2015) has championed the idea that digital groups can provide individual members with emotional support, comfort and positive affirmation in order to create a strong sense of togetherness.



Similarly, Evans (2013) signals that this may be particularly influential in digital groups bound by a common interest or practice such as a hobby, where members can share work in ways that would otherwise be limited by distance. These ideas are not new – earlier internet studies scholars such as Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002) perceived the connection possible through Web 2.0 platforms exemplified by Facebook™ as part of everyday life, freed to communicate with anyone with a shared interest and unaffected by geography or time zone differences; Gauntlett (2011) has explored these ideas explicitly with regard to ‘making’ in its varied forms. Conversely, digital platforms can be seen as beneficial in creating privacy and time for the self away from familial ties or demands (Livingstone, 2005) – a scenario which has clear links to the affordances of a closed Facebook™ group.

Miller et al. (2016) have suggested that the Facebook™ platform offers members options in crafting different boundaries of what may be personal or public, scaling the degree of their sociality by engaging in groups of different kinds and numbers in order to connect with those who share an interest. Miller’s individual work on Facebook™ emphasises that the features of the platform, such as receiving comments or other ‘reactions’ such as ‘likes’ from social connections beyond their immediate physical setting can be comforting and supportive (Miller, 2011). The author’s collaborative work (Miller et al. 2016) on Facebook™ has highlighted the lack of research into use of Facebook™ by older women, particularly in the ways that they may take on the emotional labour of community-building and maintenance or adapt its affordances to meet their own goals (Baym, 2015).

The majority of current studies which explore the impact of Facebook™ on wellbeing find it to be a negative force (Elphinston and Noller, 2011). However, some research on Facebook™ is beginning to identify positive impacts on wellbeing, such as making and maintaining friendships (Simoncic, Kuhlman, Vargas, Houchins and Lopez-Duran, 2014). Importantly for this research, there is an acknowledgement that positivist findings of this nature may be too blunt, considering all the factors which may affect particularly mental health wellbeing for participants (Blachino, Przepiorka and Pantic, 2015) and that qualitative studies could be valuable in providing a more nuanced view of experience (Oh, Ozkaya and LaRose, 2013).



Facebook™ may open up a digital space which can offer amateur makers a ‘super-connected’ (Hackney, 2013a) way to share skills and practice with others sharing their interests. Whilst there is some research exploring how digital media platforms have been used for amateur makers to engage with local and global community activism (Black, 2017; Polley, 2014), relatively little work has examined the ways that such hand crafters may quietly populate spaces like Facebook™ to share their making (Hackney, et al., 2016) in a way that can be collective (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2007), visible (Twigger-Holroyd, 2017) and private (Turney, 2009).

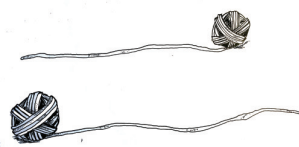
It is these aspects which are the focus of this study: The research explores and defines boundaries for an interpretation of wellbeing which is helpful as a context for research. It examines existing literature concerned with making for wellbeing and considers how attitudes to women’s amateur making may have restricted understanding of its potential impact on wellbeing. It claims the opportunity to open up a space to consider how this may be articulated in a digital platform such as a Facebook™ group. Finally, it reviews the ways that use of a digital platform may sustain or otherwise influence perceptions of wellbeing and how a closed Facebook™ group based around sharing yarn craft may exemplify this.

#### 1.4. PRIDE IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

The research questions on which this study is developed demand meaningful responses from participants, based on rich and personal reflections on subjective perceptions of wellbeing and rooted in their relationship to textiles. It is entirely appropriate to employ qualitative research approaches for the work, which recognises meaning as situated and complex, both for the participants and the researcher implicated in making connections in the work.

The setting of this ethnographic research is a closed Facebook™ group, where data has been reflected upon and findings were generated inductively. Participation was open to those interested in knit and crochet for wellbeing, had access to digital platforms and identified as women: Women are still under-represented in the Academy (Oakley, 2016) and women amateur makers significantly so (Hackney et al., 2016; Lampitt-Adey, 2018). There may be concerns about objectivity and bias, but the relationship



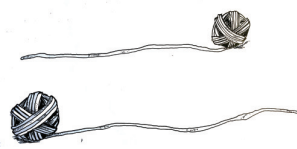


between researcher and participant in an ethnographic setting which can lead to deeper engagement and understanding may be viewed as helpful in supporting findings which, whilst not generalisable, can be viewed as trustworthy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). It is also acknowledged that the context of gathering data through a Facebook™ group may, through the focus and tone of the overarching research questions and the questions posed to participants favour a particular view of the world and could have a related effect on data shared by participants. Equally, the group behaviours, norms of engagement and concerns to perform in a particular way ‘for research’ may have had an impact on responses.

However, there are strengths in considering Facebook™ to be a shared research space, where participants are familiar with the conventions of engagement and provides a valuable opportunity for a rebalancing of power in the researcher – participant relationship. This is especially where members of the group can be flexible about responding at a time and place which is suitable for them and in supporting participants in being able to return to responses in order to add depth or detail (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). Crotty (1998) wrote about how meaning is constructed by humans as they engage with the world they are operating in, and so the positionality of the participants and the researcher is part of the inductive process as experiences are explored. The voices and stories which constitute amateur makers’ thinking about their processes and motivation in using knit and crochet, shared in digital space to support their wellbeing are situated, specific and rich, rather than generalisable or replicable.

## 1.5. LIMITATIONS AND BOUNDARIES

Part of the claim for credibility and rigour in qualitative research is to demonstrate an awareness of the “blind spots” (Tracy, 2010, p.22) there may be in the context of the research and researcher. These may be entangled and harder to clarify, for example in examining personal subjectivities - or deliberate and considered, in having a precise focus. Such blind spots are unpacked below.



### 1.5.1. Location of the Researcher

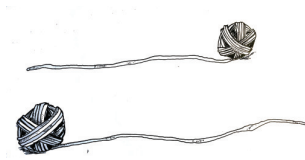
Personal subjectivities of the researcher are inevitably implicated in research. In a project which values situated, socially constructed views of the world, it is embraced as part of the process of research, whilst also being held as lightly as possible. Emotional and personal attachments are accepted as part of embedded relationships in ethnographic study, as is the emotional labour of maintaining the group for research: Many hours have been spent with participants engaged in the digital community of the 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group'.

The initial proposal for this study emerged from personal experiences of mental ill-health, where both learning to make with yarn and using Facebook™ as a mode of contact with a world beyond the home supported slow healing. This has rich benefits in engaging with participants with an authentic understanding of the importance amateur hand craft and digital social media may have in individuals' encounters with making for wellbeing. Throughout the presentation of findings in Chapter Four, there are interspersed 'Woolly Wellbeing' stories shared by participants, offering personal narratives about yarn craft and wellbeing. In the spirit of transparency and reflexivity, that of the researcher is placed following this chapter, in *A Woolly Wellbeing Story - Alison*.

If managed thoughtfully and professionally, such subjectivities can elicit valuable insights (Kara, 2015; Skeggs, 2001). However, it also requires some detachment in ensuring that participant experience is not conflated with researcher experience. Mindful priority has been given to the needs of different voices and respectfully reflecting the varied views and perspectives of all participants who may contribute to and challenge the consensus.

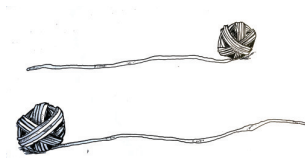
### 1.5.2. Boundaries of the Study

To explore perceptions of subjective wellbeing in women amateur makers in knit and crochet who share their making on Facebook™, is to cross a number of disciplinary boundaries. These include health and wellbeing through the arts, design, making and everyday creativity and the sociology of examining group communication in digital



space. It is therefore beneficial to clarify what aspects of study are *not* being considered in this research.

- Whilst there is much debate about where textile work belongs within the binary opposition of art and craft, this study does not investigate such divisions in any depth. The thesis is written from a position which recognises that amateur hand craft in textiles has value and the study in part is a way of making more visible home-based hand craft practices which have typically been invisible.
- This work is also not concerned with examining justifications for ‘arts for health’ interventions or policy matters such as ‘social prescribing’: Participants in this research were invited because they were already engaged in knit and crochet and most also shared their experiences in Facebook™ groups. The focus was rather on their existing, everyday making practices and the impact they felt it had on their wellbeing.
- There is also no attempt to compare the experience of supporting wellbeing through knit and crochet in physical as well as digital communities but focuses solely on making shared through Facebook™. There are existing studies which explore making in groups which meet in physical settings, including Prigoda and MacKenzie (2007), Stannard and Sanders (2015) and Lampitt Adey (2018).
- Whilst located in a closed Facebook™ group, this study is not an analysis of the dynamics in groups which may explore group behaviours or the conversational analyses of group dialogue
- Finally, as explained in 1.4 above and more fully in Chapter 3 on Methodology and Methods, the research findings are not claimed as empirical, generalisable or replicable, but see value in the specific, situated meaning making shared by participants.



## 1.6. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

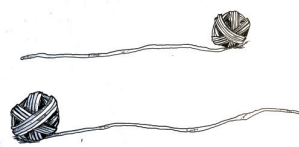
Findings from this research reveal the views of women outside the Academy, engaged in everyday practices of knit and crochet which are shared on Facebook™. Qualitative thematic analysis of this rich, complex data is used to exemplify how knit and crochet can support positive perceptions of subjective wellbeing through feeling connection with others, agency in learning or giving and especially in feeling creative. Other findings relate to the different ways participants may articulate haptic making in knit and crochet through a social media platform as hand craft is shared with others in a digital space.

There were two unexpected findings which emerged from the study: Whilst the research focused on experiences of wellbeing through knit and crochet, its location on Facebook™ and commitment to a transparent ethical process has also provided interesting insight into the experience of being a participant in research in a digital setting. Most significantly, some participants revealed how their making and sharing experiences could cause distress or pain. These results indicate that there needs to be a new way of framing a broader understanding of how knit and crochet, shared on Facebook™, may contribute to negative perceptions of subjective wellbeing.

## 1.7. SHAPE OF THE STUDY

It may be helpful to provide a ‘road map’ for the direction of this thesis, in order to navigate the text ahead. In addition to this overview, a useful glossary can be found on p.xi and in Appendix 1 on p.I.

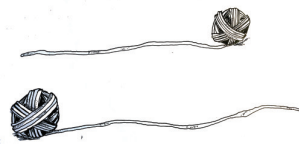
Chapter Two presents a contextual overview of literature across disciplines entangled in this study. It considers debate in definitions of wellbeing in terms of different policy makers, regarding mental health as well as physical wellbeing in exploring different ways of supporting subjective wellbeing and which inform the qualitative thematic analysis developed over the course of the study. An overview of wellbeing in arts therapies in the context of the United Kingdom over the last twenty years is given, concluding with the All Party Parliamentary Group report on Arts for Health in late 2017. (AAPGAHW, 2017a). Within this, there is a focus on research in arts-based making therapies for women experiencing specific physical conditions and mental



health challenges. It goes on to look at work in textile making for wellbeing through hand crafts such as quilting, then studies which examine how knit and crochet specifically may lead to improved wellbeing perceptions. These ideas are set alongside an examination of what it means to be an amateur craft maker, particularly a woman engaged in domestic hand craft. This then leads to a focus on how amateur making in knit and crochet for others and for the self have been viewed. Finally, the chapter considers how digital space – including Facebook™ - has been used by communities to support wellbeing, to provide connections for amateur makers and to share practices in knit and crochet.

Following this, Chapter Three explores the choices made in methodology and methods used in the research. The epistemological perspective of social constructivism is justified, given the focus on personal, situated experience, which then leads to an explanation of how inductive strategies based on aspects of grounded theory are relevant in investigating subjective perceptions of the everyday. Related to this is the explanation of why quantified, metricised measures are not relevant to this study, given that participants are not introduced to knit and crochet as an intervention for the research but instead the emphasis is on understanding their personal meaning making. The influence of a feminist mindset in designing an ethnography is presented, alongside detailed consideration of how this may be helpfully connected to the tactile, visual and digital elements of this study. There is careful focus in this chapter on the ethical issues entangled in conducting an ethnographic study in a digital setting and in Facebook™ in particular. The chapter then turns to an explanation of the different types of participant engagement and how they were coded initially using in vivo phrases from participants and then focused using qualitative thematic analysis informed by patterns in participant discussion which resonated with established criteria for enhancing wellbeing. This chapter closes with reflections on researcher subjectivity.

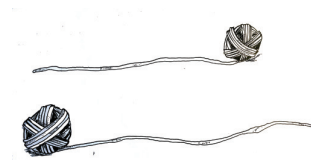
Findings from the research are presented over Chapter Four, with more detailed illustration available in Appendix 10. The chapter begins with a presentation of participant views on engaging with ethical research on Facebook™. The themes generated through exploring the rich data about making in knit and crochet shared by participants through comments and posts are then unpacked in detail. These begin



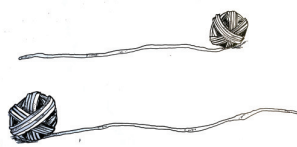
with what the notion of what ‘wellbeing’ means to those engaged in the study, setting a framework for the qualitative analysis in the remainder of this thesis: These include how participants connect and share through making in yarn and in sharing that making on Facebook™; how they may be agentic in being involved in activities including self-care, activism and feeling productive; how giving through making – to charity or family – can impact positively on wellbeing; how learning new skills and experimenting with creativity can boost self-esteem. However, the study also offers a contrary perspective, where participants identify where making and sharing can lead to increased feelings of loneliness; how knit and crochet can cause physical and emotional pain or lead to cycles of negative thinking; how efforts in meeting challenges can lead to anxieties and self-criticism, especially regarding the hoarding of yarn.

Chapter Five considers the context of the thesis, relevant literature and the findings in order to discuss what has been learnt in this study, where it contributes to existing understanding and where new knowledge is being claimed. It focuses on how the study has provided insight into participants experiences of research and their views on the complexities of research conducted in a digital space. It goes on to consider the tensions between the haptic, tactile experience of knit and crochet and its digital expression through sharing on Facebook™ before unpacking the different ways connections may be made in these practices. A particular focus is then placed on notions of ‘creativity’ in influencing perceptions of subjective wellbeing and how this may build on current understanding of a specific way that textile hand craft can enhance wellbeing. This chapter also highlights in more detail how original contributions to knowledge may be claimed in the revelations of negative impacts which making in knit and crochet and sharing on Facebook™ may have on subjective wellbeing. Here, some participants have commented in opposition to the dominant ideology in arts for health and indicated that knit and crochet may also cause considerable physical or emotional distress.

Finally, Chapter Six offers a reflective overview of the work, drawing out the significance of contributions which add to existing knowledge through confirming other studies and those which signal new knowledge. It highlights fresh directions for research which could further advance understanding of the ways that amateur women hand crafters in knit and crochet who make alone but share their work on social media



platforms may use hand craft to influence their perceptions of subjective wellbeing, as well as developing a greater awareness of potential limitations in these practices.



## A Woolly Wellbeing Story – Alison

*Early in secondary school, a teacher referred to me as a ‘needy’ person. Anxious that she meant I was prickly or sharp (also probably true), I asked for an explanation... she clarified that she’d merely picked up that I was interested in sewing and embroidery.*

*Fine needlework continued to get me by: Struggling with feeling like a square, state-schooled peg at university in Oxford in the 80s, I spent saved pennies from my grant on off-cuts of fabric from the Liberty shop on the High Street. Sleepless nights were spent on fine stitching a hand patchworked quilt. Later, the loneliness of being a new mother could be forgotten temporarily in miniature cross-stitch.*

*For me, the smaller and finer the work the better. When I discovered beadwork, I was transfixed: Needles the thickness of a hair could be used to connect Japanese delicate glass beads fractions of a millimetre wide. I rarely wore the jewellery that I made, but collected it in a box, gave it away to friends and family and - as the years went by - took commissions.*

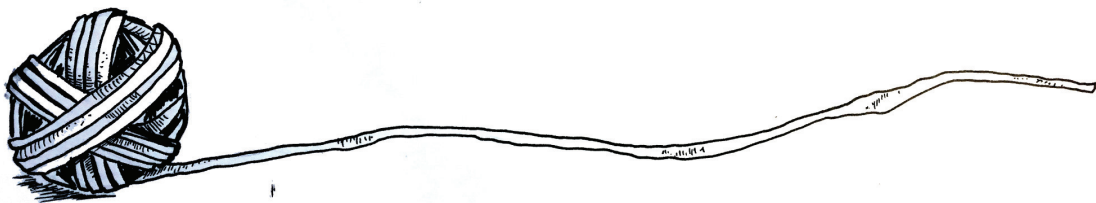
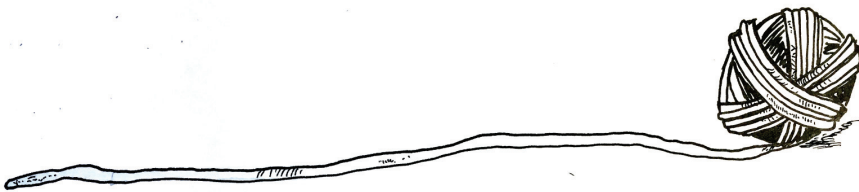
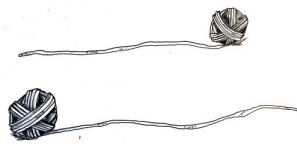
*Then darkness fell.*

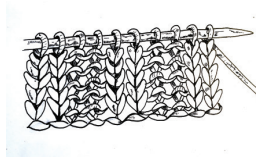
*The depression I had been battling engulfed me after a string of traumatic events. I simply couldn’t function. Leaving the house was unthinkable. Feeling almost permanently terrified, my hands shook with such uncontrollable tremors, I couldn’t even hold a pen to write.*

*My daughter did two things, which – along with medication, therapy and a loving husband – brought me back to the world. She set up a Facebook™ account so that I had a route to communication, even if I didn’t leave home... and in a beautiful reversal of the usual way of these things, she taught me to crochet. Her idea was that I could grip a large crochet hook in my fist rather than trying to hold a fine needle between my fingers, I might find the soft yarn comforting, and I could continue to make things.*

*And I did. I began posting a picture on Facebook™ each day with the tag of ‘Alison is making...’ Seeing progress in crafting small things, completing them, moving onto new makes and realising people (predominantly women) responded with positive comments became a lifeline. When I had to go out, I would take my crochet with me as something to focus on if the stimulus of the outside world became too much. I found the act of stitching soothed my mind, lowered my pulse and even helped stop my hands from shaking. Later, I anxiously dragged myself to a knitting group in a local shop. Around me I heard over and over again something which I instantly recognised – that the craft of knit or crochet had ‘saved my life’ – and I realised I was going to recover.*







## 2. CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

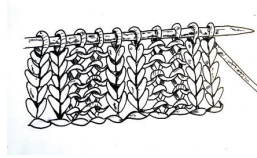
*Knit: textile created by interlocking loops of yarn to create fabric*

This review presents an exploration of reading in academic and relevant ‘grey’ literature, such as recent governmental reports, which combine to provide a context for examining perceptions of wellbeing in amateur craftswomen who make in knit and crochet alone but who share their making to Facebook™.

Following the pattern of the thesis title, this chapter first examines concepts of wellbeing, including its place in the growing arts for health movement in the United Kingdom. The significance of therapeutic practices to support women’s wellbeing is considered broadly in the arts, in textile making and in knit or crochet particularly. Secondly, notions of amateur making are unpacked, investigating women’s amateur making which may include making for others and the self. Finally, there is a discussion of research into the everyday, embedded practices of using digital platforms, with a focus on how wellbeing and textile-making may be explored in small digital spaces such as Facebook™.

### 2.1. WELLBEING

White and Blackmore (2016) suggest that any study on wellbeing should fill a researcher with “trepidation” (p.4). This is because of the much-contested work in providing useful definitions for the term, as well as a myriad of interpretations offered in policy-making at a local level or wider global context. Measurement of wellbeing is a significant focus for the arts in health movement, drawing on traditions of occupational therapy and seen in current interest in social prescribing (Bickerdike, Booth, Wilson, Farley and Wright, 2017; Kimberlee, 2013; Bungay and Clift, 2010). This study builds on existing work identifying the wellbeing benefits of knitting as a therapeutic, meditative practice (Riley et al., 2013; Corkhill et al., 2014) but also challenges assumptions about this as an entirely positive experience.



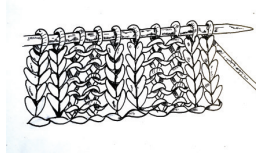
### 2.1.1. Some Key Definitions

Wellbeing is a challenging, intangible concept. It carries with it notions of happiness or comfort and has connections with secure economics yet is greater than the sum of these parts. The one thing that is posited with certainty by numerous studies over the past decades is that an academic definition of 'wellbeing' is heavily debated (Eames, 2006; Tennant et al., 2007; Dodge, Daly and Huyton, 2012; Alartseva and Barysheva, 2015). To have some clarity in its meaning, however, is crucial to this project.

The uncertainty with what wellbeing may mean begins with its morphology: Latour (1999) expressed concern that the hyphen in Actor-Network Theory deceived researchers into thinking the concepts embedded in the words were resolved. Likewise, the use of a hyphen in 'well-being' creates a compound adjective, where the two concepts of 'being', living or existing and 'wellness', or health are combined to create a specific meaning. This therefore has clear resonances of 'being well' or living healthily (and may also presuppose the alternative of 'ill-being'). This form is also used by Rhyff and Keyes (1995) to indicate a greater dynamism and deliberate activity in 'being well'. The structure of 'wellbeing' (without a hyphen) perhaps invites a broader interpretation, where meanings of the word may contain holistic implications of social, economic, psychological, emotional and physical states. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the construction 'wellbeing' has been adopted.

There are connections between ancient Greek thinking and contemporary perceptions of wellbeing. Epicurus is claimed as the author of 'hedonia' - not the wild, and indulgent behaviour, disregarding of others, that one may have been led to believe by this term, but a focus on the reduction of pain and prioritisation of happiness over all else (Swindells et al., 2013). Aristotle wrote rather of 'eudaimonia', where complex ideas about potential and personal fulfilment through practical actions such as supporting friendships perhaps reflect the more nuanced ways we now perceive wellbeing (Waterman 1993; Ryff and Singer, 1998; Ryan and Deci, 2001). The tensions between these ideas have given rise to complex and contradictory descriptions of what wellbeing may be.

Just as the All-Party Parliamentary Report 'Creative Health' recognise definitions of wellbeing as "slippery" (APPGAHW, 2017a, p.16), Dooris et al. (2017) reflect that

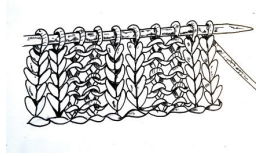


wellbeing is perceived as an “unruly” concept – “overlaid with diverse and subjective understanding” (p.5): Varied foci on wider benefits within public health and for the individual (McNaught, 2011), caught in tensions between holistic goals for collective wellbeing and “reductionist” (Dooris et al., 2017 p.2) delivery and measurement of policy mean that research into wellbeing is still an emergent area of study.

Subjective wellbeing is more complex than 'feeling happy' (Deiner, 1984), but about positive evaluation of one's present and past circumstances, personal autonomy (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) and a sense of purpose, achievement and connectedness (Ings et al., 2012). Seligman (2011) chooses to focus on the term 'flourishing' rather than wellbeing, exploring elements such as engagement with others and finding accomplishment in one's actions. These factors may not generate 'happiness' but are considered key in achieving such as state. This has resonance with Csikszentmihalyi's (1992/2002) theory of 'flow' and absorption in a challenge which gratifies not through 'happiness' per se, but in being tested at the boundary of one's capabilities. Likewise, in reviewing the literature on definitions of wellbeing, Dodge et al. (2012) draw on the work of Herzlich (1973) and Headey and Wearing (1991) on equilibrium to suggest that a formula for defining wellbeing can be based on the balance between one's psychological, social and physical resources “in the face of challenge” (Dodge et al., p. 7).

Debate around wellbeing has, in the past decade, frequently been focused on economics. The previous Conservative United Kingdom Prime Minister, David Cameron (2006), claimed a commitment to 'GWB' - the general wellbeing of the people - above the GDP, or Gross Domestic Product. Such a focus on the material continues, as improving 'wellbeing' in times of austerity is perceived as a way of managing the financial pressures in government spending, for example in national health and care services:

wellbeing evidence can not only help target public spending more effectively at improving people's lives, but in many cases, has the potential to deliver significant long-term savings by reducing demand on public services (Berry, 2014, p.1)



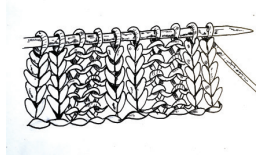
In Berry's (2014) All Party Parliamentary Report, wellbeing is posited as an outcome of financial benefits such as a comfortable income and purposeful employment, which echoes the earlier Foresight (2008) report on contributing to wellbeing through work to fulfil one's potential. However, recognition or support for developing wellbeing policy has been 'hesitant and inconsistent' (APPGAHW, 2017a, p.6).

The World Health Organisation used wellbeing to define the parameters of its original constitution in 1948, where health was perceived as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO, 2018a) and despite wider amendments, this definition has not been changed. In the Ottawa Charter, a document produced by the WHO following their first international conference on health promotion, the organisation declared the importance of supporting health for all through personal resourcefulness and social interaction: "Health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and live" (WHO, 2018b). Here, it is acknowledged that empowered communities, where health is promoted through social inclusion and individual creativity, may significantly support individual, subjective perceptions of wellbeing.

In 2014, the World Health Organisation concentrated on the challenges of supporting mental health wellbeing. Their definition was presented thus:

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community (WHO, 2014)

Some elements here may be seen as problematic. For those experiencing mental health difficulties, recognising one's own potential - or the steps which may be taken towards realising it - is extremely challenging. Indeed, to consider that one's own potential has already been attained could be seen as contrary to a state of wellbeing. Coping with 'ordinary stresses' is also complex and subjective, as individual perspectives and experiences may address challenging circumstances very differently. Furthermore, working 'productively' in a community is an aspect, as observed above,

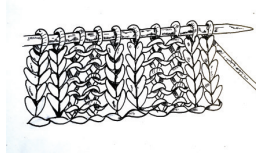


significantly tied to economics and the world of employment. Those unable to or struggling to find and keep work may feel they do not contribute to society.

The interpretations of wellbeing proffered by the New Economics Foundation (NEF, 2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011) provide an interesting context for this research. The work which became 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' was commissioned following the Foresight (2008) project mentioned above and sought explicitly to develop evidence-based understanding of actions which could enhance perceptions of wellbeing (NEF, 2008). Elements here focus on subjective, social and reflective notions, rather than finance, employment or a sense of contribution. Factors which are perceived as contributing positively towards a state of wellbeing include the need to connect and enrich one's experiences through social relations, be active in engaging with interests alone or in groups, take notice, mindfully noting beauty in the everyday, keep learning to increase competency, sociality and self-esteem and to give, sharing in mutual reciprocity (Thompson and Aked, 2011). Michaelson, Abdullah, Steiner, Thompson and Marks (2009), also writing for New Economics Foundation, focus on a dynamic approach to maintaining a sense of wellbeing and capacity for resilience through being vitally engaged in activities which make us feel competent. The NEF (2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011) 'Five Steps to Wellbeing' have also been adopted by the NHS in the UK, as part of their public engagement 'Choices' website (National Health Service, 2016) and are considered to resonate particularly with participatory arts (Cameron, Crane, Ings and Taylor, 2013).

### 2.1.2. Wellbeing and Arts Therapies in the UK

The potential for arts to enhance health and wellbeing first saw UK establishment policy recognition in the mid-1980s, with reports for the Department for Health and Social Services (Coles, 1983) and Department of Health (Moss, 1988) on arts in the National Health Services. However, wider recognition did not develop until nearly a decade later with the advent of New Labour policies in support of arts in health initiatives (Stickley and Hui, 2012a). An influential point came with the Nuffield Trust Windsor Conferences in 1998 and 1999, where arts practice in the areas of advanced teaching of medicine, UK public healthcare and wellbeing therapy in community

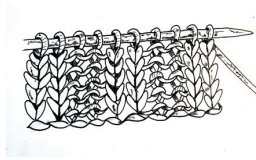


settings were explored. One of the outcomes of the conferences focused on the need to promote the notion of arts as a means of self-expression and a catalyst for

“strengthening and energising communities and enhancing the psychological, physical and emotional health and well-being of the individuals who make up those communities” (Phillip, Baum, MacNaughton and Calman, 2002, p.108)

In particular, the conferences emphasised the benefit of arts participation to mental health and emotional wellbeing - where building personal resilience, increasing in self-confidence and a sense of empowerment were observed as challenges for the future. Similar calls were seen in the work undertaken by the UK Health Development Agency (2000; Morgan and Swann, 2004) in using community participation to foster social capital (Coleman, 1990) through building bonds within and between groups, whilst also acknowledging the tensions between such approaches and the target-driven structure of the NHS (Fancourt, 2017). The tangible wellbeing benefits of engagement with arts for patients and healthcare workers alike was also promoted by the Department for Health working alongside Arts Council England (2007) in their joint report ‘A Prospectus for Arts and Health’.

The UK Department for Health (2010) reported in ‘Confident Communities, Brighter Futures’ how social networks and connection with others in the community may support psychological resilience and a sense of purpose. Likewise, the Marmot Review highlighted the necessity of holding wellbeing as a key social goal (Clift, 2009; Marmot, 2010) in order to enable personal and community capital and reduce social isolation or inequalities. However, with governmental change from 2010 with the Conservative-led coalition and followed by a Conservative government, funding in the UK has been refocused away from wellbeing support through community and social arts projects and towards access to - and exploration of the economic return provided by - professional, ‘quality’ cultural resources (Arts Council, 2010; 2013; Oman and Taylor, 2018). Whilst arts therapies were acknowledged as beneficial to wellbeing, they no longer formed part of a national policy commitment (Arts Council, 2013; Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH), 2013). Rather, supporting wellbeing through creativity is perceived as the responsibility of charitable funding, community cohesion agencies



and local government (Ings et al., 2012), or cultural commissioning through existing health trust bodies (Health Education England, 2017).

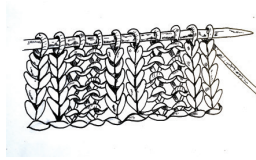
Nevertheless, more recent developments in the arts for health movement may be signalling change. In response to a review to establish the future of social prescribing led by the RSPH (2013), a special interest group on arts, health and wellbeing developed into the All Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing in 2014, with a view to exploring best current practice. The 'Creative Health' (APPGAHW, 2017a) report commissioned by this group presents findings on the work of a wide range of arts and creative practices for wellbeing which were felt to help to maintain health for all, and particularly older people through

enabling patients to take a more active role in their own health care;  
improving recovery from illness; enhancing mental healthcare; improving  
social care; mitigating social isolation and loneliness (APPGAHW, 2017a, p.  
5)

Whilst the limitations of working outwith governmental legislation or committed public spending are accepted, the report proposes a number of recommendations to develop and sustain further research into and delivery of wellbeing through the arts.

At least part of the discussion regarding the benefit of arts therapies and wellbeing is the debate surrounding empirical evidence and recording of good practice, impact and value (Health Education England, 2017; Spandler, Secker, Hacking, Kent and Shenton, 2007; RSPH, 2013). There have been calls to prove the robustness of and respect for qualitative methods for assessment (Daykin and Joss, 2016; Spandler, Secker, Kent, Hacking and Shenton, 2007; RSPH, 2013), particularly in an area where approaches such as randomised trials or control groups may have a negative effect on both participants and communities (Hacking, Secker, Spandler, Kent and Shenton, 2008). Some literature reviews highlight good practice in the rigorous recording and benefits of projects (Staricoff, 2006; Clift et al., 2009), notably where the testifying voices of participants are perceived as valid data (Clift, 2013; Cameron et al., 2013); Stickley and Hui (2012a; 2012b) likewise defend narrative enquiry to enable participants to make sense of their experiences. As Peruzza and Kinsella (2010) clarify, tensions lie between research design frequently focused on "external processes and observable

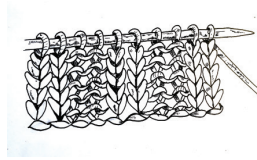




measurement” (p.267) whilst wellbeing benefits through the creative arts appear to focus on the internal and subjective. Over-simplification and reductionism (Dooris et al., 2017) in measuring outcomes of arts for health and wellbeing activities or a lack of rigour in monitoring “return on investment” (APPGAHW, 2017a, p.5) are acknowledged as a factor in the ways that wellbeing research may have been under-valued in the academy.

For some, the concept that the benefits of arts practice and therapies can be measured, evidenced and validated is a false one (Baum, 2001) or, at the very least, require caution (Crawshaw, 2008). In exploring such tensions, Broderick (2011) affirms that, as with the term ‘wellbeing’, arts and health practices are “shifting, amorphous and contested, subject to competing knowledge claims within their own disciplines” (p. 95). Rather than focusing on establishing causal links, she suggests that a useful approach may be found through investigating how correlating art therapy practice and wellbeing benefits may be understood. This echoes the call by White (2009) for study into the relationship between arts and health to take place in the spirit of philosophical or anthropological creative enquiry. As the exploration of arts therapies and wellbeing must take place in an open system, where the social world and agentic participants intervene, introducing unexpected variables and challenging predictions, research by necessity has a socially ontological focus (Archer, 1996). Nevertheless, recommendations for a more rigorous evidence base remain, with the RSPH (2013) calling for improved evaluation of research through the inclusion of indicators which capture process, larger samples and longer follow-up to ascertain whether improvements are sustained (p.47) and for arts in health practice to be more firmly rooted in theorised practice and evidence (Putland, 2008; Raw, Lewis, Russell and MacNaughton, 2012; Clift, 2012; 2013).

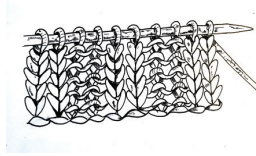
The ways that this project has responded to concerns about validation of data and measurement of outcomes may be found in Chapter 3.1.3 (The Knotty Problem of Measurement); Participant views on definitions of wellbeing are explored in Chapter 4.1 (What Wellbeing Means).



### 2.1.3. Women's Wellbeing – Research in Art and Making Therapies

Arts as part of occupational therapy has an established research reputation, focused especially on the study of what it means to age well (Clark et al., 1996; Jackson, 1996; Jackson, Carlson, Mandell, Zemke and Clark, 1998). Research into the participation by older women in a variety of art-making occupations indicates that such therapies enable a sense of purposeful meaning in the latter stages of life, through encouraging positive emotions, relaxation, a balm to anxieties about illness, and a sense of agency (Liddle et al., 2013). Reynolds et al. (2008) suggest that occupation in art-making offers a feeling of biographical continuity following the disruption of a life-limiting diagnosis. Studies into the mental health wellbeing benefits of art therapies for women experiencing chronic illness (Kelly, Cudney and Weinert, 2012; Czamanski-Cohen, 2012) and specific conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis (Hunt, Nikopoulou-Smyrni and Reynolds, 2014) or breast cancer (Collie, Borttoff and Long, 2006; Reynolds and Lim, 2007; Singh, 2011) echo with each other in their claims for an increase in feelings of self-esteem, confidence and energetic, purposeful agency. In particular, the experience of pleasure and absorption in making for wellbeing – resonating with Csikszentmihalyi's (1992/2002) concept of 'flow' - has been posited as an effective ward in managing some of the practical and emotional challenges of living with illness and disability (Reynolds and Prior, 2006). There is, however, relatively limited research into the mental health wellbeing benefits of arts therapies for physically healthy, younger women (Reynolds, 2010; Titus and Sinacore, 2013), although the findings of these studies carry similar messages around social engagement with others, freedom to make agentic choices in creativity and improvement in self-esteem.

With a determination that arts therapies are effective in facilitating reflection and supporting effective change in physical or psychological patterns of behaviours (Rankanen, 2014), the development of social prescribing for health referrals has been notable in a number of NHS Trusts (Everitt and Hamilton, 2003; Dooris, 2005; Parkinson, 2009; Stickley and Hui, 2012a). Such practices involve clinicians and non-clinical staff members guiding patients to social, collaborative and creative activities such as gardening, dance, singing or textile crafts as a way of preventing or intervening in early stages of forms of ill-health which develop from psychosocial issues (Friedli, 2007). Evaluations of such projects have indicated that patients felt more able to take

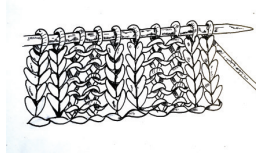


control of their lives, a greater sense of self-esteem and saw improvements in experiences of anxiety or depression following a programme of creative activity (Thomson et al., 2015; APPGAHW, 2017a). However, the effectiveness of ‘arts on prescription’ is still a relatively narrow and growing research area (Bungay and Clift, 2010; Stickley and Hui, 2012a; Blomdahl, Gunnarsson, Guregard and Bjorklund, 2013), where an explicit examination on the impact of arts practices is often missing (University of York, 2015), perhaps at the expense of a focus on financial benefits.

It is also worthy of comment that research into arts therapies for mental health care where a negative impact on wellbeing has been demonstrated is very limited indeed (Reynolds, 2004). Those studies which explore this topic in part or in full present problems for participants in increased self-criticism and denigration (Morgan, Knight, Bagwash and Thompson, 2012) or fatigue and pessimism, (Springham, 2012; Titus and Sinacore, 2013). Anxiety at a lack of productivity or frustration in not fulfilling goals was also noted as a negative impact on perceptions of wellbeing, as was distress over a loss of skill where participants may have felt competent in art making before mental health issues dominated their lives (Rankanen, 2014). Addressing the limitations and shortcomings of arts therapies for mental health wellbeing is a crucial aspect of research yet to be fully realised and forms part of this study throughout Chapter 4 (Presentation of Findings) and particularly in the discussion found in section 5.5 (Negative impact on wellbeing).

#### 2.1.4. Wellbeing in Textile Making

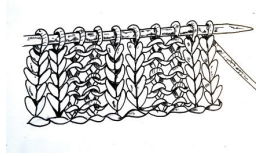
A sub-section of art therapies in wellbeing research deals with textile making for wellbeing, where participation in studies is dominated by women. Creating with colourful and tactile fabric or threads has long been perceived as supportive of creative skill and cognitive challenge (Grace et al., 2009), where participants gain reflective time to help manage ‘everyday’ stressful situations (Gandolfo and Grace, 2009). Creativity with textile making also appears to have connections with experiencing a sense of wellbeing through gift-giving as way of nurturing others, (MacEachren, 2004; Grace et al., 2009) and building connections through reciprocity (Craft and Grasser, 1998). Such connections, sharing in sewing circles or quilting ‘bees’, would seem to facilitate learning in social networks (Maidment and MacFarlane, 2011) and combat loneliness



and isolation in particular (Schofield-Tomschin and Littrell, 2001). Futterman-Collier's (2011) study began with a hypothesis that women who engage in textile hand craft are likely to have a better than average sense of wellbeing, according to a range of measures – and that this was because women textile makers actively chose hand craft as a technique to manage mood: Findings suggested that women who were 'textile-copers' actually reported a greater number of depression and anxiety symptoms, but managed their emotional challenges more effectively through making than participants who did not engage in textile crafts.

Frances Reynolds, whose independent work and that with a range of other academics in the broader field of arts for health has been highlighted above, has presented research focused especially on needle craft, such as cross-stitch, embroidery, needlepoint and tapestry. Reynolds, (1997) explores how needle craft improved the subjective wellbeing of a group of women experiencing chronic illness as a result of stroke. Here, stitching became more than a constructive use of leisure, but supported the participants in returning to a craft pursuit engaged in prior to illness. Her study reports significantly improved self-image, related to a sense of achievement in completing tasks. In addition, symptoms of anxiety or depression and "feelings of uselessness" (p.354) stemming from such biological disruption were managed more effectively. In Reynolds (2000), the focus is on needle craft as a self-management activity in participants with depression. In this study, stitching helped to challenge participants' sense of helplessness through focus on a task requiring fine-motor control and artistic decision-making. The slow pace and intensity of concentration required in needle craft was felt by participants to be both a welcome distraction from disturbing thoughts and an effective means to slow the breath in order to manage panic or anxiety.

A number of studies from the United States have focused on the tradition of quilting. Stalp, (2006) recognises this as a 'serious leisure activity that primarily women turn to for escape, relaxation and creativity' (p.107) and from which they gain emotionally. Piercy and Cheek (2008) studied the wellbeing effects of quilting in groups of women from the Amish, Appalachian and Latter-Day Saints communities: Despite their geographical, religious and cultural differences, common threads emerged in the ways that quilting together helped to foster self-esteem and a sense of success in personal

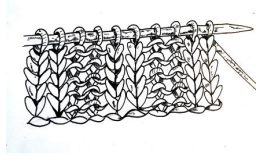


and group achievements. This, along with an acknowledgement of the benefits of establishing nurturing friendships with other women, echoes a wide range of other studies as discussed above. However, an interesting addition was made by the researchers as they noted that the building of intergenerational bonds within the family was significant in this study, where participants gained a sense of wellbeing through deliberately participating in a traditional form of textiles practiced by maternal forebears, to create intangible memories and a physical legacy through the creation of fabric quilts.

Johnson and Hawley (2004) built on the work of Behuniak-Long (1994) in considering how, in the way they are pieced together, “Quilts are not only the result of connecting, but are also artefacts of the social need for connectedness” (Johnson and Hawley, 2004, p.167). Their study found that quilters sought refuge from daily stressors through their making, finding it provided a space for reclaiming a sense of self and a soothing of the mind in the slow time taken to stitch. The “tangible, visual evidence of triumph of patience over pressure” (Johnson and Hawley, 2004, p.72) of a completed, bound quilt could be perceived as a “metaphor for connectedness” (Johnson and Hawley, 2004, p.73).

More recently, Burt and Atkinson, (2011) explored the wellbeing effects of participation in a quilting group with older women. Participants celebrated their effective use of time and skill in the creation of a tangible creative product, clarifying to researchers that quilting provided a sense of wellbeing which they could not source elsewhere. Benefits in this study highlighted distraction from anxieties, relaxation and absorption in activity and the impact of working with brightly coloured textiles to enhance mood. However, the researchers found that it was the social connection with others, including receiving of praise and affirmation from members of the group, which was of more significance to these participants.

A developing area of study can be found in the wellbeing effects of textile craft, particularly in hand sewing or knitting, in ageing well. Kenning (2015) has posited that hand craft in lace making is a helpful activity in supporting wellbeing in older women through distraction in dealing with poor health, maintaining a strong sense of self, learning and developing skills and being part of a community. In dementia care,



Pöllänen and Hirsimäki (2014) explored not necessarily the making, but the handling and conversation about a range of hand crafted textile objects such as children's clothing or socks, with a group of participants in a residential setting. They observed that textiles offered a rich, tactile memory trigger for those experiencing dementia: It placed helpful cognitive demands on patients as they recalled, often in detail, the design and making processes and discussion of the objects in groups with a carer increased sociality and provided both sensory and emotional pleasure.

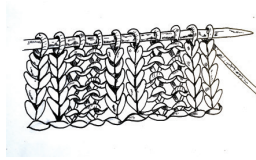
### 2.1.5. Wellbeing Through Knit and Crochet

The Stitchlinks study, undertaken by Corkhill et al. (2014) focused exclusively on the wellbeing impact of what was termed 'therapeutic knitting'. The occupation of reflective making with yarn for participants affected by a number of physical and mental health issues was designed to facilitate a positive mind-set which echoed the "strong, resilient, flexible fabric" (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.39) of knit itself. The study posited that group activity in knitting enabled participants to feel productive and in control, distracted from attention on both psychological and physical pain (Riley et al., 2013):

The inherent psychological and social benefits that are known to come from knitting practice, together with the satisfaction that comes from creating an end product... are an indication of its potential to contribute to personal and social wellbeing (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.36)

However, where and how the "inherent" benefits of knit or crochet as a "self-soothing activity" (Corkhill et al, 2014, p.42) which has an impact on wellbeing needs to be unpacked (Riley et al., 2013; Lampitt Adey, 2018).

An overview of such perceived benefits is provided below, considering the tactile pleasure of working with the hands, engaging in slow-paced leisure, making as supportive of a sense of agency or empowerment and the ways that knit or crochet facilitates social connection.



#### *2.1.5.1. Knit and crochet: The tactile*

One of the elements in making with yarn considered as having an impact on mental health wellbeing is the soothing quality of the soft and tactile. Shreeve (1998) suggests that this may stem from infant memories of the “protection and warmth which is provided by constructed wraps” (p.41). Shreeve also celebrates the undervalued sense of touch as a maker works in “dialogue with their hands and fingertips” (1998, p.43), the body moving in response to the rhythm of the work, which resonates with Pallasmaa’s (2009) ideas about the quiet, haptic wisdom of working with the hand to experience “spontaneity, sensuality and tactility” (p.117). Myzelev (2009) and Turney (2012) also write of the tactile experiences in crafting yarn objects that evoke nostalgic memory for both the maker and the recipient of the object. Turney (2012) describes this as the romance of “the mark of the maker’s hand touching the object and in turn the object’s consumer” (p.305), suggesting that the tactile knit or crochet gift is imbued with the essence “of closeness... of an embrace” (p.307) as hand crafted objects become loaded with emotional significance for the maker.

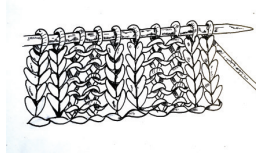
#### *2.1.5.2. Knit and crochet: Slow pace in leisure time*

A common message in research into wellbeing and knit or crochet is the benefit of electing to use luxurious leisure time, hard-won from frantic and busy lives, to create an artefact which requires slow movements. Minahan and Wolfram Cox (2007) suggest this is a “nostalgic response to a world no longer present” (p.213), where participants may take a rare opportunity to establish their own, independent time-scales. A similar concept is found in Myzelev (2009), where knitting which

allows for socializing with others or being able to contemplate or daydream is connected to the luxury of having free time, of being able to produce something inefficient in terms of the modernist understanding of the world as moving at specific speed towards specific goals (Myzelev, 2009, p.152)

This echoes Parkins’ (2004) focus on the reassignment of yarn craft as “pleasure and care for the self” (p.434) rather than labour driven by necessity. The use of knitting to take control of the pace of one’s life is often presented as a positive and empowering psychological benefit, where the physical experience of creating with yarn, constructing





an object through “countless repetitions” (Myzelev, 2009, p.152) has also been considered to support self-care relaxation, daydream and thoughtful mindfulness. In the Stitchlinks study, the “bilateral, rhythmic, repetitive and automatic” (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.40) movements of stitching were proposed as facilitating meditation – a tool which could also be effective in enabling participants to manage pain, distress and anxiety (Riley et al., 2013). A similar finding can be found in Clave-Brule, Mazloun, Park, Harbottle and Laird-Birmingham (2009) in their study on using knitting to manage anxiety in those affected by eating disorders, or in Pöllänen and Voutilainen’s (2017) recent work on hand craft experienced as a mental resource for new mothers.

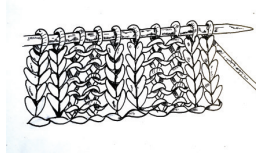
#### *2.1.5.3. Knit and crochet: Agency and empowerment*

The engagement of imagination in knitting, such as making simple choices of colour or texture can also be perceived as promoting a sense of independent action, as the participant responds to design which “allows the agency, the decisions to be made by the amateur” (Myzelev, 2009, p.152). Determining such choices can promote creativity, purposefulness, self-esteem and pleasure in “groups who have no experience of these in other aspects of life” (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.41) and where “being actively creative as opposed to being a passive recipient of a destructive force such as an illness or traumatic event” (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.41). Such independence and agency can also develop into engagement with social activism, where communities of yarn crafters feel they can be productive in contributing to collaborative projects:

Knitting as a communal activity lends itself particularly well to collective arts projects that often blend nostalgic feelings with the concerns for current political and social issues (Myzelev, 2009, p.155)

Turney (2009) comments that agency is also found in deliberately providing space for interiority and introspections when focused on the construction of knit and crochet objects, with a goal of “mastery” (p.159) of both the object and the self. These considerations similarly form the basis of work by Hackney (2013a; 2013b) and Hackney et al. (2016) in considering how the “apparent cultural invisibility, the domestic, gendered and amateur constituents of home and hobby crafts provides a



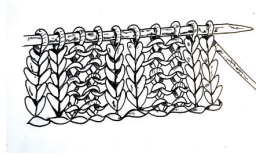


starting point to explore ‘other’ forms of agency and activism” (Hackney, 2013b, p.26) of a more ‘quiet’ nature – related to action at a more personal, individual level.

#### *2.1.5.4. Social connection*

In exploring the reasons why amateur knit and crochet makers engage in groups, drawing together to share progress or celebrate the accomplishment of a finished object, a key thread appears to be the strong sense of belonging and social connection. Hackney (2013b) claims that hand crafting with others may have “unique potential to bring individuals and communities together in dialogue through making” (p.23) as they are simultaneously absorbed in the craft and drawn closer to one another to share in a group setting. Also illustrating this is Freeman (1987) in her writing on quilting, where she comments on the ways women have used hand crafting groups to work cooperatively and creatively, sharing stories and social contact, giving and receiving emotional support as they work with fabric: This was a means by which women have historically expressed their creativity in making textile artefacts which could serve as a lasting piece of evidence of their existence. Making textiles alongside others, according to Myzelev, (2009) satisfies a “desire to be in public and yet be able to undertake a personal, intimate activity of creating craft objects” (p.153). Turney (2009) also writes of the social connection offered by knit and crochet groups, where women can gather together to converse and connect, contributing “to personal and collective narratives of both makers and the making” (p147). Twigger-Holroyd (2017) describes the emotional connection offered by a conscious attention to the rhythmic and therapeutic nature of the stitch.

A similar idea is proposed by Corkhill et al., (2014), in acknowledging that knitting, whilst often a solitary pastime, is “also a vehicle for making social connections, both virtually... and in real time” (p.36) where participants can improve confidence and self-esteem. Meditative stitching appears to provide relaxation and an escape from psychological distress or feelings of loneliness, suggesting that participants “feel productive at times when they were engaged in passive activities” (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.37) or experiencing social isolation. However, it is also noted that the ways in which one can correlate the “significant association between membership of a knitting group



and feeling happier and better” (Corkhill et al., 2014, p.38) is not easily evidenced (Lampitt Adey, 2018).

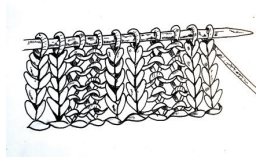
The Stitchlinks study suggested that it may be that the position of knitters in a group setting – with hands closed around the front of the body and eyes cast down, focused on making – helped to create personal space, acting “as a buffer to the outside world” and enabling “personal control over the level of their participation in the group” (p.42). Such an image of making in groups, where absorption in work held in the hand or the background task of mindful knitting opened an intimate space for deep conversation and reflection can also be found in the work of Leckey (2011), Hackney, (2013b), Shercliff (2015) and Hackney et al. (2016).

Corkill et al. (2014) do also acknowledge a potential negative impact of such activity on mental health wellbeing as a group setting may be intimidating and a “drawback for introverts and those with low social confidence” (p.41). Moreover, support for wellbeing does not necessarily exist only through group setting for making: Hemmings (2014) challenges the contemporary view of social connection in groups as the social norm and that the creative potential of meaningful solitary activity in knitting has been devalued.

#### 2.1.6. Summary

It is acknowledged that the term ‘wellbeing’ is contentious but that in this research it is being used as an holistic construct. Economic or employment factors are not being accounted for here. Rather, ‘wellbeing’ takes in elements of social, emotional and physical wellness alongside personal satisfaction in being engaged with others, feeling appropriately challenged, accessing an activity which can support absorption and engagement.

Wellbeing through arts in health has been a policy focus in the UK over the last forty years, especially in the ways that isolation and loneliness may be reduced through engagement in the arts, supporting emotional wellbeing and mental health through social connection and community. Numerous studies, often focusing on women, have contributed to understanding of the ways that engagement in arts activities can help to



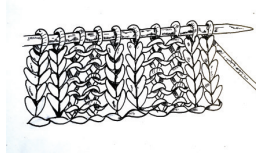
manage disruption through physical and mental illness through improving a sense of confidence, self-esteem and agency. Research which concentrates on textiles emphasises the benefits that hand craft can bring, including making social connections and feeling agentic through making and giving. Yarn craft in knit and crochet has been found to enhance perceptions of wellbeing through its slow-paced, tactile nature and use of calming, meditative stitch.

## 2.2. WOMEN'S AMATEUR MAKING

This study focuses explicitly on the frequently invisible experience of the female amateur maker. The original root of the word indicates one who loves (Oxford English Dictionary, 2017) and there is a simplistic vision of this which presents an image of a hobbyist working on an activity in a domestic setting purely for pleasure rather than professional or commercial interest. The same Oxford English Dictionary entry proffers further definitions of the amateur as one cultivating a pastime which is often disparagingly perceived as superficial, shambolic or inept. The tensions between these interpretations continues to trouble the academy: In Hutchison and Feist's (1991) Policy Studies Institute (PSI) survey into amateur art and craft, they acknowledged how such work was despised and ignored by many, with the word 'amateur' becoming a pejorative notion, worn down by the "steady drip, drip of condescension" (p.6). In contrast, through his extensive work on leisure, Stebbins (2015) identifies amateur pursuits as uncoerced, providing satisfaction and fulfilment in free time, whilst Merrifield (2017) takes a somewhat more florid perspective – "an affair of the heart, like love... complicated, messy, often tumultuous. But it is always about honest human expression" (p.170).

### 2.2.1. The Amateur Craft Maker

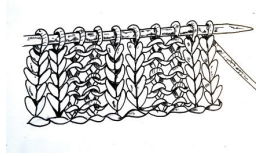
Amateur craft has often been viewed as self-indulgent with its history in ridiculing of the middle classes engaged in craft pursuits as a way of managing increased leisure time (Merrifield, 2017). The studio arts movement began to make a distinction between the arts and hobbyism, including the impact of Ruskin's reflections on the soft qualities of textile as especially associated with women's hand-work (Adamson, 2007).



At a point where craft could have been elevated in wider culture, divisions were rather reinforced, and this appears to continue.

Despite a chapter in Adamson's work 'Thinking through Craft' (2007) being entitled 'Amateur', the argument closes with a lament over the lack of "policing" (p.142) historically offered by the guild structure so that amateur craft has been "plunged headlong" into a "troublesome" (p.139) and discredited activity. He writes of the lack of critical distance amateurs possess compared to artists in engaging with "activities done in the spirit of gratification" (Adamson, 2007, p.139) and suggesting that there is mutual disdain between the amateur - focused on interiority, and the professional - focused on a higher artistic plane. This thesis is not the place to discuss the intricate differences between arts and craft, but it is notable that both Sennett (2009) and Adamson (2013) challenge that marginalised "craft, as a cultural practice, exists in opposition to the modern concept of art itself" (Adamson, 2013, p.2). Adamson also echoes Adorno and Horkheimer (1944) in reinforcing the concept that an amateur's making does not exercise either autonomy or creativity but is rather "passive in social terms" (Adamson, 2007, p.140), blindly supporting a capitalist economy in purchasing hobbyist commodities for mundane activities such as "sewing in the living room" (p. 140). The tone here is dismissive, with the reader invited to imagine the dullness and social ineptitude of a model railway weekend or of a satirical view of younger makers with their "internet chatrooms and open source knitting patterns" (p.139). Even in these considerations of amateur craft activity, one can hear the condescension that concerned Hutchison and Feist (1991).

Whilst advocated by Adamson as a fellow critic in arguing the lack of critical distance in amateur craft making, Stebbins (2015) in fact suggests that time spent in amateur making is an enriching activity, developing capacity for perseverance, care and sincerity in the rewards of amateur accomplishment. The positivity gained from self-gratification in leisure hobbyism is perceived by Stebbins as a reward and relief from the challenges of complex modern life. Similarly, Merrifield's (2017) view of the amateur is one of unalloyed positivity, where amateurs thrive "in the realm of freedom rather than in that of necessity" (p.169) and are devoted, "proud ... impassioned" (p. 157) about their cherished interests.

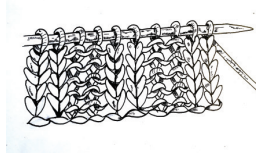


In contrast, for Sennett, “craftwork focuses on objects in themselves and on impersonal practices” (2009, p.288) and an amateur’s focus on subjective processes is presented as a troubling approach which may open up the possibilities of a Pandora-like destructiveness. Instead, Sennett rejects connection with the personal and rather analyses the “perfection and skill in craft through being a ‘thing’ rather than a physical person” (p.174). This suggests a disconnection from craft’s “transformative impact on the sense of self” (Gauntlett, 2011, p.ix) – in describing the creativity of a professional glassblower as she “lost awareness of her body ... no longer aware of her bodily self” (Sennett, 2009, p.174), he challenges the concept of making as embodied, fully aware of the hand in the making process.

Contemporary academic writing on amateur craft is also divided by a focus on gender. Partly this is perpetuated by the masculine form of the label ‘craftsmanship’ which one can observe in many publications including those by Sennett (2009) or Frayling (2011). Here, a focus on masters and “the things men have made” (Frayling, 2011, p.93) is constructed with a conscious, consistent use of the masculine pronoun. Crawford (2009) has found popularity in celebrating the pleasure of men working with motorcycles and the metaphor of getting one’s hands dirty in making. Mytting (2015) develops the arguments of Pye (1969/2007) in the ‘workmanship’ of not just controlling and shaping wood but cutting and displaying it. Sennett’s popular work ‘The Craftsman’ (2009) focuses phallically on such “arousing” (p.194) tools as the “sublime screwdriver” (p.195) and a focus on making well and beautifully only for its own sake. An amateur’s completed craft object with an afterlife of use, especially in a domestic setting or for mundane purpose appears to be uncomfortably below consideration and has become invisible in these texts. Within the already contested context of amateur making, women’s work - especially in the fibre arts - holds a challenging and sometimes precarious position, “impacted by multiple legacies of gendered exclusion” (Luckman, 2014, p.48).

### 2.2.2. Women’s Amateur Craft Making

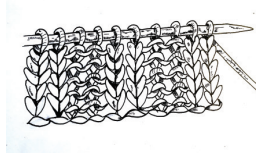
Traditionally, there has been an ideology of women working with textiles as subjugated or working for selfless purpose (Parker, 2010). Creation of pieces for domestic or personal adornment was – and with the contemporary popular media focus on the



home and 'homemade' still is - considered as amateur, of lower artistic status and "at odds with intellectual life" (Parker, 2010, p.214). Dalton (1987) claims that women's leisure crafts are "bound up with the superficial, the solely decorative and transient values" (p.32) within a closely boundaried life of emotional labour focused on femininity and family, where making is frequently perceived as a way of "giving and gaining love" (Dalton, 1987, p.32). The reflective statements individual women make about their identity through crafting in yarn continue to be overlooked in society, if not criticised as self-absorbed or inappropriate (Jenkins, 2013).

Imagery of women practicing textile crafts, such as Helen of Troy, Penelope or the Lady of Shalott has long been used to illustrate women's separation from the world, obedience to or subversion of masculine control (Canevaro, 2014). Lippard (1978) posits that women's focus on domestic craft was "engendered by isolation within a particular space and by the emphasis on cleaning and service" (p.486) leading to the female becoming "prouder of her house, her container, than she is of herself" (p.486). Combatting such isolation was attained through communication such as sharing craft patterns and thereby fulfilling an "emotional necessity to make connections" (Lippard, 1978, p.487) with other women. She reflects that women express their identity and desire for communication through "rehabilitation... patching" (Lippard, 1978, p.489) and fixing – an idea echoed in Sennett (2012), who observes the collaboration and meditative ritual in "fixing broken things" (p.199).

Adamson (2007), posits that historically, "the trope of amateur craft was, for feminists, a way of recognising the enforced conditions of their own practice ... the presumption that women's creativity itself was domestic and non-professional" (p.150). Whilst acknowledging the marginalisation of women's work as limited to the domestic sphere and considering the ways that feminist academics have "insisted on a certain respect for such work" (Adamson, 2007, p.150), he presents an ambivalent view of amateur textile crafts. These are framed as a "symbol of unjustly quashed creativity ... a token of the feminist desire to break free out of the stultification of domesticity" (Adamson, 2007, p.151) but revealingly presumes an unease in practicing crafts of such low status. Even whilst addressing such an argument, Adamson chooses to conclude his focus on amateur making with questions of quality and the indiscriminate acceptance of the notion of value in textile craft produced by women. The reader is reminded that



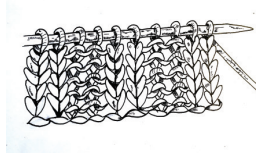
Adamson's chapter on amateur making in fact focuses on a professional artist in Anni Albers and the amateur, notably the female textile crafter, has been dismissed from view.

Such ambivalence can also be seen in ostensibly feminist texts, such as Virago's 'Women and Craft' (Elinor, Richardson, Scott, Thomas and Walker, 1987), where Dalton (1987) celebrates the increase in professionalism in women's craft work compared to the lack of innovation shown by amateurs who make at home. She challenges that women, boundaried within a domestic setting and with limited social or cultural contact find their imagination proscribed by magazines which encourage amateur makers to rely on other designers and become distrusting of their own creativity. This approach is challenged by Hackney (2006; 2013a) in her work on magazines from the 1920s and 30s as well as contemporary examples, where texts such as these can be seen as windows, not barriers - providing a way for amateur craftswomen to engage with wider ideas about design, community and creativity.

In her seminal text, 'The Subversive Stitch', Parker (2010) argues that the needle is a "weapon of resistance" (p.ix), subverted by women who use textile craft "to make meaning of their own in the very medium intended to foster polite effacement" (p. 201). This argument perceives a unity, rather than an ambivalence, in the ways that women use amateur craft-making to challenge patriarchal subjectivity. This concept is illustrated through Suffragists' "tactical" (Parker, 2010, p.199) use of embroidery on parasols, banners and fabric petitions containing the stitched signatures of the imprisoned and force fed. Crafting is acknowledged "as a strategy to examine and challenge contemporary issues" (Black and Burisch, 2010, p.610) from the Greenham Common anti-war protests or artist Marianne Jorgensen's 'Pink Tank' (Jorgensen, 2006). Making with yarn in ways such as these are examples of how amateur knit and crochet may be ongoing in the home for a myriad of purposes and illustrate that domestic space is a "more fragmented place than the frozen space of patriarchal mythology" (Buckley, 1999, p.57) may suggest. As Twigger-Holroyd (2017) states, dismissive attitudes with their

established connotations are not so easily shifted; yet new perceptions of sewing and knitting as creative and aspirational practices are certainly





mixing with the long-standing meanings associated with these crafts  
(Twigger-Holroyd, 2017, p.38)

#### *2.2.2.1. Women's work in knit and crochet*

Hand craft in knitting or crochet has long been “marginalised from academic discourse” (Turney, 2009, p.4) and there is relatively little research on its role in women's everyday lives (Stalp, 2015; Stannard and Sanders, 2015). Turney suggests that it

represents a democracy of objects and practices so prolific, so mundane, that it isn't noticed, it's taken for granted. And, combined with the cultural stigma of the easiness of knitting, which belies its actual complexities and skill, knitting is overlooked (Turney, 2009, p.5).

It has been seen as so ubiquitous as to become invisible, made anonymous in its connection to the domestic, (Burman, 1999), too entangled with notions of patriarchal oppression (Black, 2012) and too lacking in innovation or creativity (Buckley, 1999) to be of consideration. Layer upon layer of limited value in the quotidian has mean that “what it represents and means is so culturally constructed and embedded that it is assumed there is nothing more to say” (Turney, 2009, p.1).

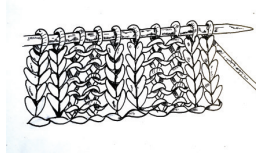
However, Hemmings (2010) highlights that knit and crochet should be reconsidered, as

with our practical need for knitting long gone, this popular pastime now appears in unexpected guises with intentions and meanings that stray far outside the realm of the domestic and utilitarian (Hemmings, 2010, p.9)

Black (2012) similarly highlights how younger women who come to yarn craft in adulthood, rather than being taught as children, perceive the activity as a fun and creative way of slowing down in a fast-paced modern world, sharing pleasure and social connection in physical and digital groups. However, for many women, their interest in making is not a new phenomenon, but has been long established over time and may be more focused on quiet, individual making alone.

Ann MacDonald's 1988 work on knitting in the United States of America suggested that the motivation of amateurs' engagement in yarn craft was based significantly on gift

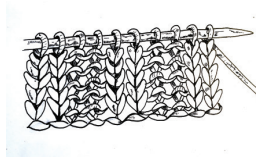




and charitable giving, sociality and engagement with others, an opportunity to be calm and creative and - perhaps in a sign of a changing economic context - to make money. Primarily, participants in MacDonald's research explained how they used yarn craft in order to remain busy, fulfilling a "puritan work ethic" (p.xxi). This factor was so dominant that it contributed to MacDonald's title, in celebrating that knit or crochet meant that there were 'No Idle Hands'.

Academic work in knit and crochet has tended to focus on group sociality and connectedness in groups (Lampitt Adey, 2018), where creativity and skill in hand craft, shared with others in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), contributes to notions of group identity (Schofeld-Tomschin and Littrell, 2001). Examples of this include Prigoda and McKenzie's (2007) study of a public library knitting group, where Human Information Behaviour Models were used to identify engagement in the crafting group as motivated by its community location, as well as a gathering together to work productively or an opportunity to celebrate maternal identity, friendship and nurturing of others. Additionally, Stannard and Sanders (2015) employed a framework built on Uses and Gratifications theory (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1973) to present findings on the motivations of young women knitters. Stannard and Sanders (2015) suggested that it was primarily enjoyment in creativity which was key to participants, alongside social camaraderie, tension release and confidence-building through affirmations from others.

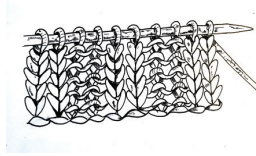
Recent work by Kate Lampitt Adey (2018) explicitly investigates the motivations behind individual women's amateur making in yarn, rather than connection in group activity. Her work emphasises how women engage in knitting within their everyday lives in order to find a distraction from stressors, a greater sense of agency in challenging oneself, and engagement with creativity as part of being 'in the zone', with links to Csikszentmihalyi's (1992/2002) 'flow'. Crucially, these benefits were connected in Lampitt Adey's study as related "to both the knitting process and product" (2018, p. 89), reminding that the experience of 'flow' is not only to be found in meditative rhythm of stitch, but the tactile connection with yarn and the crafted object.



#### *2.2.2.2. Knit and crochet for others*

Stebbins (2015) expresses concern regarding the ways that women's leisure time may be influenced by perceptions of obligation, where leisure time is impacted by the gendered, free labour of care-giving. – an impact felt as much in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as in Coser's (1974) labelling of the family as a 'greedy institution'. What may be highlighted in studies on women's textile hand craft, is that making for others is an influential factor, although this may present in a number of ways. Schofield-Tomschin and Littrell (2001) suggested that the nurturing of next generations – of skilled crafters and of children or other family members, was a significant motivator in engaging with knit or crochet. Similar findings were identified by Prigoda and McKenzie (2007) where participants explicitly focused on knitting as a gendered activity positively connected to the care work of being a mother and grandmother, echoing ideas about women's role in maintaining an ethic of care (Held, 2005) related to home and the family. Such established constructions of meaning in knit and crochet making have led to the activities being used "as an indicator of familial bonds, the forging and continuation of them ... connoting love, family and femininity" (Turney, 2009, p.12).

Engaging in knit or crochet for others may also reach out into society, as activism and a form of protest. This may be as a response to mass consumerism, in producing unique or homespun objects (Stannard and Sanders, 2015), part of reclaiming devalued activity as part of a feminist act (Chansky, 2010; Groeneveld, 2010) or engaging in public projects which are focused on collaboration and community building in addition to social engagement or activism (Bishop, 2006), such as the various knitting projects related to celebrating the Olympic Games (Polley, 2014; Humphreys, 2008). Craft-activism, Craftivism (Greer, 2014) and 'knitivism' may also be a form of yarn craft designed as a public provocation, such as challenging ways to think about public spaces (Price, 2015). Springgay (2010) describes this as an embodied and tactile political engagement, where knit or crochet may become a new type of cultural resistance - "a mutable, creative and negotiated space that is a political activity in itself" (p.112). With a genealogical link to the use of hand craft in direct political protest for the Suffrage movement (Parker, 2010) and the AIDS quilts of the 1980s (Newmeyer, 2008), the most recent phenomenon of this may be observed in the 2017 Women's March engagement with the 'Pussyhat' (Pussyhat Project, 2017). This simple knit or crochet



hat in pink yarn, with its square shape creating cat-like ears on the wearer, has been the subject of critique as an artefact which could be perceived as essentialising or reinforcing privilege and inequalities (Derr, 2017). Nevertheless, the media reporting of millions of women wearing the ‘pussyhat’ means that it has become a contemporary phenomenon in feminist craft activism (Black, 2017).

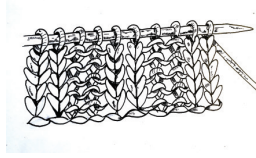
#### *2.2.2.3. Knit and crochet for the self*

Hackney (2013a), Shercliff (2015) and Hackney et al. (2016) also identify a space for ‘quiet’ activism, which is less overt than ‘craftivism’ in public places but which may be used as a way of contributing to society. For example, this may involve making “quietly for a variety of charity projects” (Nelson, 2010, p.81) where both literally and metaphorically, making connections, offering practical support and sending messages of solidarity can be achieved through yarn craft. However, their interpretations of ‘quiet activism’ in amateur textile making may likewise be about exercising the everyday creativity of the individual maker.

Such focus on interiority and self-reflection in making constitute “small-scale and intimate experiences” (Hackney, 2013a, p.187) which can be both shared with others and undertaken for the self. Hackney et al. (2016) develop this concept further in considering how textile-making can become “a means of thinking and acting independently” (p.39) as part of a conscious social engagement which could operate within collaborative groups, such as knitting groups, or as part of reflective personal practice. Considerations of the ‘quiet’ activist may be concerned with how hand craft supports critical thinking, knowledge exchange, awareness of sustainability or self-expression (Hackney et al., 2016).

These ideas are also explored by Shercliff (2015) in her work reflecting on hand craft in groups as well as alone: She describes the ways that making allows time to give attention to the self, whether this is within informal gatherings where women speak together, or in making alone as part of reverie and inward reflection:

When I stitch I am familiar with the sensation of how the world I make and occupy seems to centre around my hand movements; it feels important in



the moment of making and I focus my attention on this instead (Shercliff, 2015, p.190)

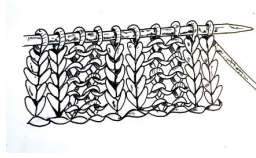
Contemplative making in knit and crochet is also discussed by Turney (2009), who highlights that making for the self, rather than making as part of caring responsibilities, is an even more muted and marginalised practice. She explores the concept that making with yarn may be a way of “marking time” (Turney, 2009, p.135) or highlighting “a sense of being, of having been “there” (p.139), where the crafted object can become a piece of sensory mark-making, or of locating oneself in time, place or in relationship with others.

There are interesting connections here to the perceived wellbeing benefits of knit and crochet discussed in sections 2.1.4 (Wellbeing in Textile Making) and 2.1.5 (Wellbeing through Knit and Crochet) above, including the potential for making in knit and crochet to provide connection, calming and meditative rhythmic movement, relief from anxieties and grounding touch of soothing fabric. In this, it is possible to view making for the self as not merely making artefacts for personal use, but as an individual act of self-care.

### 2.2.3. Summary

This section has provided an overview of perspectives on the amateur, notably the amateur who is engaged in hand craft for pleasure and is located in a domestic setting. There are dismissive and pejorative associations in many explorations of this kind of work, where hobbyism in soft textiles is perceived as passive or lacking creativity. Such criticisms are often gendered and can both reinforce and reflect the subjugation of women through representations of amateur textile craft.

However, women’s engagement in amateur hand craft has also been presented as far more complex and positive. It has been used as a tool for protest and a way to demonstrate agency and is a route to experimenting with ideas about creativity and design. Research has also reflected that making with textiles, notably in knit and crochet, can build a strong sense of community in crafting for family or charity and support experiences of ‘flow’ in making quietly for the self.



## 2.3. RESEARCHING THE DIGITAL EVERYDAY

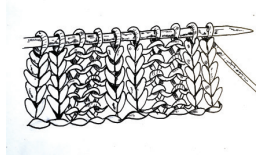
It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully engage with the many complex ideas around the impact of social media networks on presentation of the self, identity and broader society. However, it is relevant to explore key ideas about how the material culture of yarn craft may be embedded in digital places and the opportunities it appears to offer in creating spaces for building community, improving wellbeing and developing new ways for knit and crochet to be experienced “as an activity that is a mix of the personal and the (networked) social” (Orton Johnson, 2014a, p.306).

The digital social networks of knit and crochet makers are not separate from their physical lives “and indeed contribute to their sustaining” (Lichti-Harriman, 2012a) through supporting agency and access to new learning and connections. Bonanim and Parkes (2010) describe how digital media platforms can decentralise and distribute “new tools and materials as well as the communication channels to join new communities” (p.180) to develop ‘future-craft’, although Miller et al. (2016), Pink, Ardevol and Lanzeni, (2016) and Kember and Zylinska, (2012) already see such connections entangled with and integrated into everyday digital places, rather than as an ‘other’ separate space. Communication takes place with others in digital space in ways that are “no less human, less authentic or more mediated” (Horst and Miller, 2013, p.4) than other actions embedded in the everyday.

### 2.3.1. Making Spaces in Digital Places

In revisiting the second edition of ‘Personal Communication in the Digital Age’, Baym (2015) identifies that there is still a need for a more nuanced consideration of digital communication which is still as likely to be considered as threatening or shallow than strong or diverse. This is one of the ways in which everyday use of digital community spaces is invisible and the communications that takes place within them as somehow inauthentic or even unreal, operating in a distinct ‘cyberspace’ (Gibson, 1984).

Such ideas were painted in early studies of the internet or computer-mediated-communications, such as Putnam’s (1995) ‘Bowling Alone’, Carr’s (2010) ‘The Shallows’ or the ‘floating worlds’ theory proposed by Gergen (2003) where individuals are increasingly isolated by their screens. Turkle (2011) expresses concern for the state of



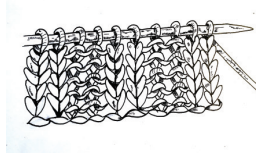
communication between members of society who may be present in their physical space but only engaged emotionally in another, digital location. However, it may be more helpful to consider how the embedding of the digital in everyday life operates as part of social norms, where “online and offline flow together in the life-world of contemporary relationships” (Baym, 2015, p.6).

Baym (2015) has led the way in exploring how groups operating ‘online’ perceive digital space as a rich, shared place where collaborative practices build a community. Whilst Putnam (2000) presented shared resources and support as ‘bridging’ capital which could glue communities together, Baym challenged the notion that many online groups provided “one another with the sort of emotional support often found in close relationships” (2015, p.92). This echoes earlier work on computer-mediated-communication by Cutrona and Russell (1999) who explored the varieties of support provided in groups operating on digital social networks which included not just informational support, but emotional support to provide “comfort and security during times of stress” (p.322) and support for bolstering self-esteem through “individual positive feedback” (p.322) on capabilities and strengths.

Social support and shared practices in groups operating within a digital space contributes to a feeling of community in a social media environment such as a Facebook™ group. It suggests that a digital space designed for communicating with others sharing a common interest is especially valuable when considering hobbyist groups as “communities of interest, attachment and belonging” (Evans, 2014, p.87), or communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This allows individuals to share or work collaboratively beyond the limiting considerations of physical space, geography or architecture and focus instead on the digital places in which practice can be situated.

Bennett (2008) queried that, if the internet can be perceived as a new form of life, how are new communities being brought forth by its use? Rather than perceiving new forms of community in the digital sphere as superficial and inauthentic, traditional concepts of community must be broadened (Moreton 2012a): As Crang, Crosbie and Graham, (2007), reflecting on new cities, posits, the Academy should

seek to find a nuanced way of thinking through the interactions of mediated and physical action as online and offline interactions are



constituted and constructed together to sustain and transform the complex temporalities and spatialities of everyday urban life (Crang et al., p.2406)

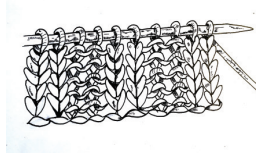
where new spaces emerge from digital community practices (Moreton 2012b), creating fresh opportunities for connection and shared knowledge with others in the network.

Haythornthwaite and Wellman (2002), posit that in considering Web 2.0 technologies as part of post-modern everyday life, time and space for communication is compressed so that focus is no longer on communication between fixed places, but only between individuals, who create digital spaces for their relationship and actions, irrespective of geographical proximity or limitations. This is echoed in the concepts of Livingstone (2005), who in examining how children use internet media in the home, suggested that public and private boundaries were mediated to *create* privacy and solitude through digital spaces protected from the physical home environment. This is perceived as an agentic and positive step in controlling social connections, in contrast to the anxieties expressed by Turkle, above.

Reflecting on the qualities of what may constitute community in digital space – “space, shared practice, shared resources and support, shared identities and interpersonal relationships” (Baym, 2015, p.84), it is possible to see how social media platforms such as Facebook™ can sustain it. They can offer asynchronous exchanges which allow interaction to be sustained in large groups as individuals may respond without demands being set by time constraints. Simultaneously, they can also offer synchronous communication in real time which can “enhance the sense of placelessness that digital media can encourage and make people feel more together when they are apart” (Baym, 2015, p.8).

Such placelessness could also be perceived as a significant benefit where individuals within a digital community can communicate without constraints of physical geography (Baron, 1998). As Baym also reflects, whilst the social cues that may make communication more meaningful can be missing in social network platforms, a “lack of shared physical context does not mean interactants have no shared contexts” (2015, p. 10) as other factors such as knowledge exchange and interest can also be influential.





This work suggests that rather than the concerns of increased individualism and shallow banality suggested by Carr (2010), many online groups develop a clear sense of community as they use digital spaces to create and sustain new relationships with people across geographical locations as they gather to discuss shared interests. Ideas here resonates with work by Rheingold (1993/2000) on virtual communities as he claims personal connection in online groups can overcome limitations created by differences in distance or time. In digital community groups, strong emotional ties are created which counter the views of those who claim isolations and fragmentation on social network systems, especially where participants invoke sharing behaviours. Here, groups designed to share a common interest often develop a practice around social support (Wellman and Gulia, 1999) and may indeed “allow people to return to certain kinds of intense and interwoven forms of social relationship” (Horst and Miller, 2013, p.148).

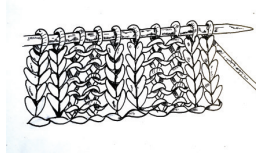
#### *2.3.1.1. Making space on Facebook™*

Daniel Miller has explored Facebook™ specifically as a digital space which “facilitates and expands” (2011, p.165) social opportunities. In comparison to texts which are concerned with the fragmentation of close-knit groups, Miller considers how participants in groups are more comfortable with the concept of ‘community’, referring to it colloquially and often assuming the “normativity and netiquette” (2011, p.186) of providing help where needed through the shared language of providing comments and ‘likes’:

individuals gain comfort and support when they receive comments... from people other than their close friends. At times of grief or depression, the evidence of a wider community of concern may be of considerable importance (Miller, 2011, p.185)

An expansion of community in digital space is labelled by Miller as “the death of distance” (2011, p.194), where sociality is opened beyond the home through connections made transnationally, not just locally. This work was developed further through the University College, London (UCL) ‘Why We Post’ project (Miller et al., 2016) in the development of the term ‘scalable sociality’ where the authors describe





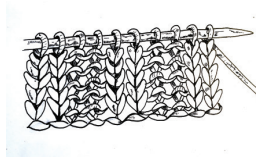
how “social media has colonised the space of group sociality between the private and the public. In so doing it has created scales, including the size of the group and the degree of privacy” (Miller et al., 2016, p.200) it offers participants.

Of particular relevance to this study is the labelling of Facebook™ by Miller et al., (2016) as “a comforting but older relative” (p.208) in a world of fast moving social media technologies. This reflects not only the early establishment of Facebook™ as a social media platform, but potentially something about its user base: At the beginning of the UCL ‘Why We Post’ project, there was an assumption that young people would primarily be involved in the world of social media – a tendency illustrated by the dominance of early Facebook™ research focused on teenagers and college students (Miller et al., 2016). However, the findings of the project indicate that there is a lack of research into how more mature users are operating in this space for their needs and that rich research has yet to be conducted which explores Facebook™ use “more with older women than younger men” (Miller et al., 2016, p.209). This is particularly because, just as Shercliff (2015) identified in her work on hand craft groups, often “social communication as an activity is most commonly associated with older women... who do the collective work of maintaining community and social norms” (Miller et al., 2016, p.209).

Finally, it is worth considering again the work of Nancy Baym, who, reflecting on the “mixed modality” (2015, p.71) offered by communication of embodied conversation in writing on social network platforms such as Facebook™, that users adapt and adopt the affordances of a social media to enable their own social and relational goals (O’Sullivan, 2000). Such communities, sharing in digital space continue to operate as any group in physical space, where members commit to making worlds of meaning (Cohen, 1985/2001) which are significant to them.

### 2.3.2. Wellbeing in Digital Spaces

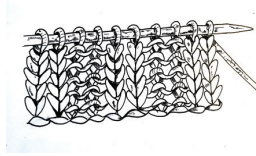
Studies exploring wellbeing in digital spaces are currently limited in focus, considering the experiences of teenage or college students, often concentrating on those with mental health issues and the negative social impact of social network use versus the benefits of physical social contact (Valenzuela, Park and Kee, 2009; Miller et al., 2016).



There is very little work indeed about the positive impact on wellbeing in an everyday practice of engagement in computer-mediated communities such as Facebook™.

That billions of users participate in social network systems (Greenwood, Perrin and Duggan, 2016) is a key point in investigating the impact of how engaging in digital spaces may have on wellbeing. In Baker and Algorta's (2016) review of quantitative studies, the field is acknowledged as complex, somewhat limited and in need of more nuanced study than the simplistic tendency to sensationalise with labels such as "Facebook™ Depression" (p.646). The majority of studies focus on negative effects of social network use, particularly regarding social isolation and low mood, with a specific focus on teens' experiences. This may be connected to extended and addictive use or detachment from social connections, comparing oneself to others or negative interactions with others (Valkenburger, Peter and Schouten, 2006). However, the Baker and Algorta review was conducted within the parameters of a particular understanding that social network systems participation was related to extending existing networks, rather than meeting "strangers" (2016, p.638) – which does not take into account the engagement through communities of interest or practice as suggested by Baym (2015).

It is interesting to note that some studies highlight that it is the quality, rather than the frequency of social network system communication which has an impact on positive or negative wellbeing experiences (Wright et al, 2013; Davila et al., 2012). That is, users perceived the exchange in digital space as a positive interaction where they received support or connection. This approach is supported by Verduyn, Ybarra, Resbois, Jonides and Kross (2017) where, whilst acknowledging that some social network platform engagement may have a negative impact for some users, those who used such groups for social support may experience significant positive benefits. Studies conducted by Steinfeld, Ellison and Laupe (2008) and Kim and Lee (2011) similarly conclude that social media sites may positively influence positive perception of wellbeing, especially where social support was offered. However, it may be that those with stronger networks and more frequent social contact or access to capital experienced more positive benefits than those with more limited networks or greater existing isolation: these are the 'virtuous' and 'vicious' circles of social network site use as described by Yoo and Jeong (2016).



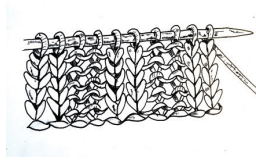
#### *2.3.2.1. Wellbeing and social network use for those with mental health issues*

There are concerns that social media use in general may have negative implications for those experiencing mental health issues, including enhancing loneliness and depression (Yao and Zhang, 2014) or reducing social networks (Kross et al., 2013). A number of investigations posit the need for balance in assessing the threat of negative social comparison and insecurity or anxiety in equilibrium with the benefits of gaining connection and support in 'safe' digital spaces (Singleton, Abeles, and Smith, 2016; Collin, Rahilly, Richardson and Third, 2011). Such findings may begin to challenge the dominant thinking about social network engagement as being negative (Baker and Algorta, 2016; Burke, Marlow and Kento, 2010).

Park, Lee, Kwak, Cha and Jeong (2013) suggest that those experiencing existing mental health issues such as depression were more likely to use Facebook™ than other social network platforms, using its features to seek resources, information and to provide support for others as well as gain it for themselves. Likewise, Brusilovskiy, Townley, Snethan and Salzer (2016) investigated social network site use with participants experiencing serious mental health issues, finding that the benefits of engaging with a digital community were significant in supporting agentic behaviour and participation in a wider community. These impacts far outweighed any assumptions about social media use leading to isolation or loneliness for participants. Rather, those identified with mental health issues - and who, as a result of their condition, could find social connections in physical space somewhat challenging - could possibly enhance connections, friendships, access to resources and other support networks in digital spaces (Highton-Williamson, Priebe and Giacco, 2015).

#### *2.3.2.2. Facebook™ and wellbeing*

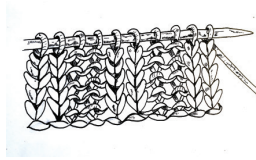
Some studies indicate that the negative implications on wellbeing are increased with social media site use, especially where users participate on Facebook™ (Feinstein et al., 2013). This is particularly related to the tendency towards making social comparisons or experiencing intrusions and disruption to daily life (Elphinston and Noller, 2011). Reviews in this field nonetheless admit to ambiguity or a lack of sophistication in considering all possible variables (Blachino, Przepiorka and Pantic, 2015) as to whether 'dysfunctional' Facebook™ use can increase serious depression. However, other



studies indicate that those with motivation to engage in Facebook™ groups may experience positive impact on perceptions of wellbeing as it offers an environment predicated on sociality and sharing, where users can use the affordances of the platform to craft messages and maintain friendships (Simoncic et al., 2014) and otherwise build social capital (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield and Vitak, 2011).

There are limitations in these extensive quantitative reviews as indicated above, highlighting the complexity and inconsistency in the nature of findings on social network site use and its impact on wellbeing (Oh, Ozkaya and LaRose, 2013). This is an opportunity for qualitative studies which could provide more nuanced examples of experience may be valuable. One of the key findings of the University College, London 'Why We Post' project (Miller et al., 2016) explored the question of social media and whether the use of Facebook™ in particular led to 'happiness' – a deliberately broad term which may be useful here when considering wellbeing. There were challenges in such a complex topic, considering the situated understandings of what 'happiness' may mean at both a cultural and individual level (Miller et al., 2016) in trying to explore how social network systems could affect happiness or wellbeing in participants. The study echoed the concerns above where making comparisons with others, or the potential for exposure of a gap between what is 'performed' online and the actuality of one's emotions. However, there were also patterns of interest in the study as participants shared an increased capacity for learning, being agentic or making connections with others – all of which have clear connections to the NEF (2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011) criteria for 'ways to wellbeing'. Participants managed what the group called "scalable sociality" (Miller et al., 2016, p.200) in connecting with others separated by distance (but not interest) across a social network system which could be aligned to the users' needs. Here, systems such as Facebook™ were perceived as "not one single thing, but take on different forms, depending on the individual user" (Miller et al., 2016, p.195). However, those different affordances were not straightforward, and the findings acknowledged to be far from conclusive.

Whilst there have been quantitative studies which make assumptions about its use and the relevance of social media technologies, such as Baker and Algorta (2016), these have not considered the increasing uptake of platforms such as Facebook™ in particular, as suggested by Greenwood et al. (2016). The use of Facebook™ as a

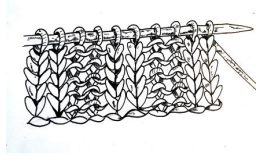


support for positive experiences of wellbeing is contradictory and complex (Best, Manktelow and Taylor, 2014) as it appears to have the capacity to increase feelings of depression, isolation or an exposure to bullying practices, but can also provide social support, a safe space for self-expression or personal disclosures and may help to build self-esteem.

### 2.3.3. Amateur Making in Small Digital Spaces

Perspectives on women's amateur craft making have shifted (Gauntlett, 2011; Parkins, 2004) from an anachronistic, gendered and tiresome task which necessarily had to be accommodated around familial and domestic obligations (Coser, 1974; Deem, 1986). Its revival as meaningful leisure which offers pleasure (Stalp and Conti, 2011; Turney, 2009) has grown alongside opportunities for sharing making to a wider audience through the affordances of new social media platform technologies. Digital spaces such as Facebook™ enable a new form of “super-connected amateur” (Hackney, 2013a, p.171) to connect with others through shared practice and knowledge exchange to open up possibilities of new skills and social connections (Hackney, 2013b; von Busch, 2010).

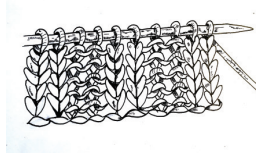
Yarn craft practices mediated through and merged with Web 2.0 practices have supported the augmentation of a haptic activity (Rosner and Ryokai, 2008; Orton Johnson, 2014a). The focus of this thesis is not on the consumerism enabled by social network systems (McKay, 2010), but how makers have created a collaborative, social community through generating and sharing content (Humphreys, 2008) on blogs, forums, and platforms such as Facebook™. It is important to note here that these spaces are not designed for instruction (Orton Johnson, 2014b), but for communicating with others, making connections and sharing experiences (Baym, 1998; 2015; Wellman and Gulia, 1993). These links were represented physically in Lindstrom and Stahl's (2014) 'Threads' project, where a travelling sewing circle shared a practice in stitching Short Message Service texts prior to their deletion. They can also be interpreted metaphorically by King (2012) in her description of the entangled connections between the textile fibres in knots, crochet, knitting and spinning and the sensory “fingery” fibres of the web as it connects communities and practices.



A focus within the literature explores how this plays out in the ways social network sites are utilised to promote political activism or resistance expressed through yarn craft or craftivism (Corbett and Housley, 2011; Greer, 2014). In returning to explore the Virago publication 'Women and Craft' (Elinor et al., 1987), Jefferies (2016) considers the ways that social media has newly empowered feminist activism in hand craft, using the affordances of digital platforms to gather together 'craftivists' to collaborate on political statements created through knit and other textile practices. Whilst celebrating the growth of interest in hand crafts emerging alongside social network sites, where crafters can work independently and collectively, Jefferies also claims that craft-activism should be located in the specific context where they are needed, challenging the global connection that use of social media platforms by amateur makers may have.

Creativity in digital media environments such as Ravelry, You Tube and blogging celebrates community events such as knit and crochet 'yarn bombings' (Humphreys 2008; Polley, 2014) or the mobilization of makers through social media. This can be observed in the 2017 Women's March, which made a mark on popular culture with millions of knit and crochet pink 'pussyhats' illustrating contemporary activism and resistance (Black, 2017). Nevertheless, there is relatively limited extant literature which explores quieter, individual and domestic yarn craft mediated through social network sites (Moreton 2012b). Minahan and Wolfram Cox (2002) explicitly built on the digital as an example of Oldenburg's 'third place' (1989/1999) where women could explore material culture. The authors made links between the fibres all for textile utilised hand crafts skills and the "twisted pair cable used for telecommunications" (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2002, p.6) which could be accessed within the domestic setting but open up a space for making and connecting which reached beyond home or work. Such a concept is explored by Gschwandtner (2010) in her reflections on the threads which connect knit and a digital forum of kite flyers, where there is a shared "desire for community and for a connection, perhaps celestial, beyond one's locality" (p.25) These complementary activities are working "not just with hands, string, solitude and meditative craft" (Gschwandtner, 2010, p.25) but also using social media networks to share and create.

Connections through leisure were made possible by development of Web 2.0 platforms and new media technologies such as e-mail, blogs and chat forums (Flew, 2002) were

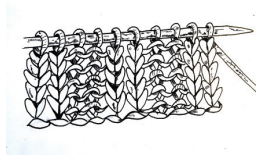


identified by the authors as spaces where women shared both craft skill and broader life experiences as they made connections with others from beyond their physical community. For example, in new digital ‘stitch and bitch’ groups members focused on craft production and were predominantly female (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2002). Such groups were posited as responding to a need for community which built rather than reduced shared social capital and reflected “a wish for more self-expression of creativity and social connection at a community level through leisure” (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2002, p.8).

The ‘cyber-feminists’ engaged with a digital ‘stitch and bitch’ groups were perceived as part of a now “wired world” (Luckman, 1999, p.36) where ‘techno-feminists’ or ‘wired women’ (Wajcman, 2004) could begin to both address the gender divide and engage in collective leisure. Minahan and Wolfram Cox suggest that engaging in a digital third space was especially significant in offering a unique environment for social activity and sharing expressions of personal creativity for women engaged in textile making which was usually solitary, passive and boundaried by the physical domestic space. Thus, digital ‘stitch and bitch’ groups offered an opportunity for resistance to such structures or the isolation it engendered and as a celebration of women’s domestic craft work which habitually held low status. Making similar claims but without the focus on resistance and activism, Johnson and Hawley (2004) conducted earlier computer mediated communication studies into forums used by groups of North American quilters to make connections, considering the internet as “social glue that holds quilter groups together and allows them to continue the quilters’ social network into the next generation” (Johnson and Hawley, 2014, p.70) .

Such virtual connections were made through text alone rather than images, where computer-mediated message boards facilitated access to a wider community of makers not known in person, but accessible in digital space. Likewise, Turney (2009) comments on the ways that blogs and other social networks support the communication of intergenerational skill across cultures, where digital places for knit and crochet “exemplifies, reproduces and sustains a community mentality” (p.150) akin to physical groups and where new media technologies can provide a space for makers to explore what knit or crochet means to them. Through a social media platform, making with yarn can be realised as a “collective activity, performed in the privacy of





one's home, but also of a 'private' sociability, where activity fuels friendship" (Turney, 2009, p.152).

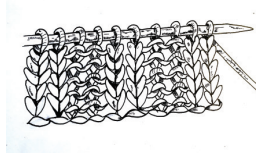
Kate Orton Johnson (2014a; 2014b) focuses on the space for participation, knowledge exchange and community created by the specialist social network site for knit and crochet – Ravelry (2018). She explores how "the material, tactile processes of knitting are integrated with digital practices" (Orton Johnson, 2014a, p.305) in a welcoming web culture where participation is invited through a platform which facilitates planning, documentation of the storage or 'stashing' of yarn, skills learning, group chat in forums and consumption in the buying and selling of digital patterns. Orton Johnson argues that Ravelry provides a digital space which extends the traditional boundaries of knit and crochet as private and domestic through Web 2.0 technology which encourages users to tell their individual stories and "creative processes in ways that allow others to feedback, remake, modify, adapt and customise" (2014a, p.306). This is a specific example of the concepts offered by Fort (2007) and Rosner and Ryokai (2008; 2010) in presenting digitally mediated spaces as platforms where yarn craft can be shared by a global community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) or interest or as a way to make personal connections with others. Twigger-Holroyd (2017) values the collective, digital activity as "it creates a sense of community, provides inspiration for other makers and increases the visibility" (p.44) of makers, especially where individuals are isolated or lacking in peer support.

Orton Johnson (2014a) posits a hybrid leisure experience which moves between the digital and physical as

social media have given knitters new ways to think about and engage with their craft that, in turn, have become an embedded part of their construction and enjoyment of knitting as a leisure pursuit (Orton Johnson, 2014a, p.306)

She goes on to claim that a renewed, re-mediated understanding of knitting as serious leisure is created via platforms such as Ravelry, where quiet, private craft becomes integrated with a "digital articulation" (Orton Johnson, 2014a, p.315) of making shared with others. This, sharing in online spaces becomes an additional labour and care, but one which Orton Johnson suggests, becomes its own integral part of making practice –

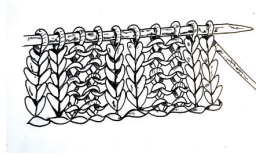




echoing Marres (2012) in her perspectives on participation which requires additional work. This extends the haptic experience of hand crafting with yarn by projecting it into digital space, thereby embedding the ‘online’ mediated activity within the practice of knit and crochet for leisure and pleasure in both making and sharing with others. In addition, such digital documentation of yarn craft created in domestic settings challenges the traditional perspectives of women’s textile making as undervalued or invisible, including the ways that knit and crochet makers may use digital space to document and archive artefacts or patterns to preserve them against ephemerality or fragility (Buckley, 1999). The digital space provided by the social network system can be perceived as an integrated experience and as an aid to making (Cockburn and Ormrod, 1993) where yarn-making and makers find a way to “mutual becoming” (Lindstrom and Stahl, 2014 p.135; Braun and Whatmore, 2010; Haraway, 2008).

Behuniak-Long (1994), writing on quilters, concluded that crafters manipulate technology to meet their own needs – to preserve personal significance in making textiles. At a time when internet studies were concerned with the negative impact of technology on social values, a harbinger of isolation and shallow behaviour (Carr, 2010; Putnam, 2000), Behuniak-Long rather identified digital space as a place for sharing therapeutic making as a relief from the chaotic speed of the modern world, an opportunity for connectedness with loved ones and other makers in the wider community and a chance to share personal aesthetic expression. Reflecting on this, Johnson and Hawley (2004) highlighted that such behaviours illustrated how makers “integrated technology into their lives, rather than submitting to it” (p.77).

These studies over the lifetime of popular use of social network systems suggest that – in contrast to concerns about the ‘authenticity’ of the handmade in digital spaces (Woolley and Neiderrerr, 2016) - sharing making online increases the visibility of amateur yarn crafters’ making processes and achievements, augments their experiences beyond the local, physical space and offers access to a wider community of makers. To return to Gschwandtner (2010), the connections between knitting and sharing in a digital space are intertwined, where



in reaction to the speed and disembodiment of internet connectivity, people turn to hand craft for slowness, corporeality and tactility. Then they turn back to the internet to reconnect. We're navigating a circular route from material to immaterial, using string or yarn to test what's within our reach (Gschwandtner, 2010, p.25)

#### 2.3.4. Summary

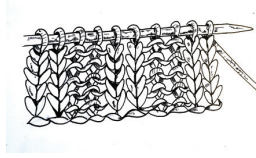
The embeddedness of social media networks in daily life has been highlighted in this section: Engagement with digital media platforms is not separate or disengaged from the physical world but entangled within it as users adapt and appropriate its affordances to develop community building and collaborative practices.

Social media and Facebook™ use in particular features in numerous studies which frequently identify its negative impact on wellbeing as it can enhance feelings of loneliness or depression. However, contrasting research indicated that the variables involved in such conclusions are too complex and that users of social media platforms may also depend on other factors including access to information and connection with others as a way of enhancing positive experiences of social and emotional support.

The ubiquity of digital social networks likewise reflects everyday activities including making in knit and crochet. Positive contributions to wellbeing through platforms like Facebook™ can facilitate greater social connections with other makers, access to expertise and help in mobilization for political agency. Sharing making in digital spaces can also enhance wellbeing through crafting a visible archive which documents making practices for the self and shared with others.

#### 2.4. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

Research into the value and impact of women's making in amateur settings remains relatively limited (Lampitt Adey, 2018; Riley et al., 2013; Myzelev, 2009), however the research referred to in this chapter suggests that amateur textile makers in knit and crochet do so in order to find a quiet space for meditation and reflections and to share in local, socially-motivated yarn groups and 'glocal' online communities rich with

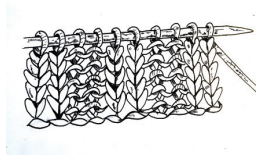


expertise. If indeed “health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play and live” (WHO, 2014) everyday amateur making in knit and crochet appears to have the capacity to contribute beneficially to perceptions of wellbeing as a soothing act of self-care, supporting creativity and agency or in being part of a larger community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Engagement with communities may take place in digital space, where social network platforms such as Facebook™ can support social connection and promote agentic activities in making the crafting process visible (Orton Johnson, 2014a).

Burman (1999) suggested that, for women’s amateur hand craft, its “common, and everyday character ... is precisely what makes it significant” (p.3) in its potential to expand understanding of material culture. In addition, amateur makers’ engagement with communities in digital space, linked to sharing interests such as knit and crochet may therefore present a valuable opportunity to explore the immaterial in relationship with the digital and its wider effects on wellbeing.

This chapter has provided context through examining a review of current literature in the intersecting areas of interest for this study. It has provided an overview of debate surrounding the definitions of wellbeing and explored its place in policy and practice in arts therapies in the UK. Women’s wellbeing through creative making was then unpacked, with a particular focus on how working with textiles in general and knit or crochet in particular has been found in to have benefits for wellbeing – from promoting empowerment, a slow pace for reflection as well as social connection. Views on the amateur maker were explained, with a focus on women’s amateur craft-making and the ways in which such occupation has been devalued or marginalised. Motivations for women’s amateur hand craft in knit and crochet – making for others and for the self - were then presented. Finally, the location of this study – in an everyday digital setting – was explored, with consideration of communities in digital spaces such as Facebook™ and the ways both wellbeing and amateur making could be supported in these digital places.

Given the context explored above, there are opportunities to review and think afresh about perceptions of subjective wellbeing in women amateur makers in knit and

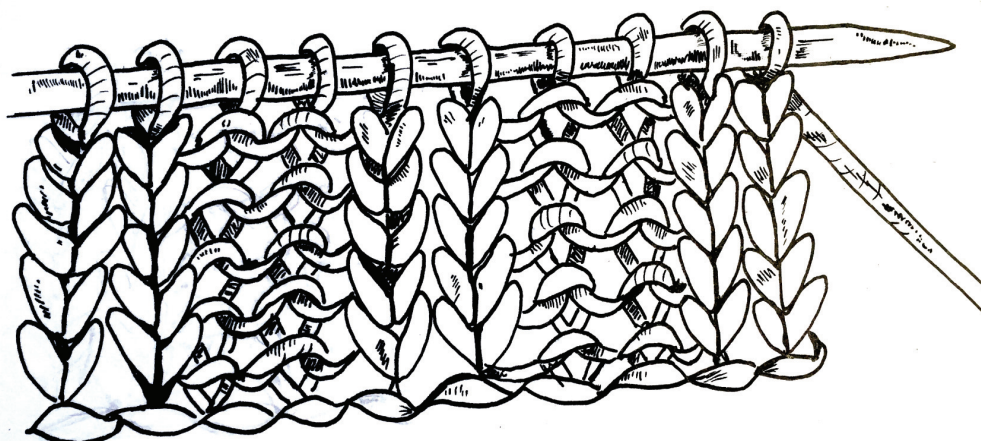
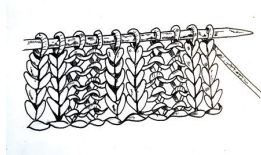


crochet who usually craft alone but share their making to Facebook™. This research is designed to

- build on knowledge found in existing research about the potential for knit and crochet to enhance subjective wellbeing through social connection, belonging, agency and providing space for calm and meditative reflection.
- expand ways of thinking about how perceptions of subjective wellbeing may be supported, particularly in emphasising the significance of feeling creative
- attempt a different approach in engaging, communicating with and eliciting data from participants through Facebook™
- deepen understanding of participant views on the nature of informed consent, contributing to discussion about the ethics of research in digital settings
- challenge assumptions about knit and crochet being an entirely positive experience, and that aspects of this making practice may have negative implications for wellbeing in its potential to invite physical pain and emotional distress

Findings which illustrate these concepts are presented in Chapter Four, where participant data offers a rich picture of how engaging in knit and crochet when alone and sharing making within a Facebook™ group may contribute to perceptions of subjective wellbeing. Reflections on these findings in the light of the literature presented here are then developed in Chapter Five.

Prior to this, the following Chapter Three presents an exploration of methodology in this research, which is inductive, interpretivist and feminist in approach.





### 3. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

*Selvedge: stitches defining the edge of textile; useful in seaming project together*

Having established the context and warrant for this study through a review of relevant literature, the focus now turns to a presentation of methodology for the project. The location of the research, both through and about the social media platform Facebook™ seeks to make connections between the everyday experiences and broader social effects of using such technologies (Kember and Zylinska 2012; Wakeford, 2004) and making with yarn in knit and crochet. In concentrating on participant voices, where meaning is made through commentary on personal experience, it is appropriate that the study reflects an inductive, ethnographic approach rooted in social constructivism. The research questions are:

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?
- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?

Firstly, this chapter will explain the choice of an interpretivist paradigm, with social construction at its heart. Proceeding a discussion of the 'knotty' problem of measurement in the study, the relevance of a feminist approach as part of an exploration of ethnography is then argued, along with an unpacking of what this may mean in a digital setting. Integral to this is a detailed focus on ethics, which reflects the value placed on the ways that participants share their experiences and how this can be supported through research design. The methods of data collection and strategy for data analysis are presented and the chapter concludes with a consideration of the need for reflexivity in a project which is so deeply connected to the subjectivities of both participants and researcher.



### 3.1. PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

The research position for this PhD study is one of social constructivism, assuming that participants can build an understanding of the subjective meanings of their experiences (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Lincoln and Guba 1985; 2000). The study takes an interpretivist approach, focused on an empathic understanding of human experience and perceiving knowledge as personal (Bryman, 2012). Inductive interpretations of qualitative data employ a feminist lens, observing the views of women with “conscious partiality” (Mies, 1993, p.68) to support the investigation of connections between crafting and wellbeing, the purpose of crafting for self and others and the functions of collaborating in a digital community.

#### 3.1.1. Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a way of viewing the world which accepts that different people may experience a range of realities along a continuum. These realities are socially defined and are affected by the subjective experiences of everyday life (Hammersley, 1992): Knowing or understanding the world is based on subjective perceptions which are significantly influenced by situation, context and individual or collective action (Charmaz, 2014). A further layer of constructivism is present in acknowledging that the research questions, analysis of data and interpretation are similarly ‘constructed’ through the subjectivities of the researcher. This is discussed further in 3.6 (On Reflexivity) below.

In this study, an awareness of multiple realities on a continuum of what can be known has added complexities: Personal, subjective experiences of the everyday are being modified through its digital presentation on the social media platform Facebook™. Participants are actively contributing to an environment with a specific focus and manner of sharing, but in choosing to share making with yarn, they are modifying the Facebook™ invitation to express ‘What’s on your mind’ - the prompt inviting users to post online - by offering comments on and images of haptic, tactile items.

Furthermore, through engaging in such sharing in a *closed* Facebook™ group where posts are not seen on a participant’s personal timeline but only within a boundaried group, participants are making deliberate choices about the way that their digital social



world is constructed: They are ensuring that communication takes place with those they may not know in person but who understand their craft, as opposed to those who they may know well but who do not share their interests. Further discussion of this can be found in section 3.2.2 (Digital Ethnography). Moreover, it is acknowledged that in engaging in an informed way in a research project, the practices of sharing one's 'everyday reality' may be modified further as participants could express a re-constructed version of their experience which they deem appropriate for the study. This may be considered a strength in the ways that participants can take time to provide detail and depth in their responses in a place and time convenient to them (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015) and transfers more control over how participants may be viewed.

#### *3.1.1.1. The influence of Constructivist Grounded Theory strategies*

Openness to subjectivity and the implications of social constructivism means that - for this research - theoretical ideas about yarn-making and wellbeing have emerged from data over time, rather than investigating hypotheses posed prior to working with participants. Strategies based in an inductive, grounded theory have supported an inductive approach to gathering data, reflecting on potential patterns in early analysis and returning to elicit further data to clarify concepts which provide a theoretical understanding of participant experiences (Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont, 2003; Charmaz, 2014). This follows in the spirit of early grounded theory principles (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) but also embraces the constructivist turn which acknowledges social reality (and research within it) as socially constructed, relativist and influenced by layers of subjectivity (Clarke, 2012; Charmaz, 2014): This makes it impossible to embark on the research process without any preconceived hypotheses. The use of grounded theory as a methodological key is not being claimed here, as categories and concepts for coding have not been developed into discrete theory. However, further discussion on the influence of constructivist grounded theory strategies in exploring patterns in participant data, such as phased coding, may be found in section 3.4 (Data Collection) and 3.5 (Data Analysis).





### 3.1.2. Interpretivism

Considering the ontological and epistemological viewpoint indicated above, with perceptions of reality and knowledge framed as constructed, the orientation of this research is interpretive. The researcher and participants were involved in the project as a way to seek understanding in the everyday (Cresswell, 2013) with regard to textile making and digital sharing. Through using an interpretivist approach, this research seeks to understand personal experiences and perceptions of wellbeing in sharing yarn-making in digital space. This embraces the impact of subjectivity as a way not to fix meaning but to draw rich inferences from the voices of participants – this is not a precise image of their world but a constructed interpretation of it.

Such an inductive approach, with a focus in situated, particularised and personal meaning making has resonance with the work of Crotty (1998) in viewing the ways “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” (p.43). As mentioned in the previous section, in this study it is accepted that interpretation and analysis are inevitably subjective and constructed based on researcher positionality. Geertz (1983) reminds us that this process of construing what participants have shared in an ethnographic study can only be the catching of an allusion or proverb - a ‘working towards’ - rather than a definitive - understanding.

Debates related to questions of validity and reliability in qualitative research and interpretivist studies in particular continue (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005). There are complexities in presenting an interpretation of a socially constructed world (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) – in this case a closed Facebook™ group. However, an alternative, more positivist approach is not considered suitable for this study, with a focus on pre-defined hypotheses, tested to establish a concrete 'truth' of makers' experiences. Moreover, there can be reasonable confidence in the value of studies such as this, where specific, situated responses can generate wider debate. The goal of this research is not to provide positivist certainty, generalise or ensure future replication, but to explore how participant voices can be perceived as constructing knowledge of the world through their experience of it: Validity is present in representing the opinions of frequently unheard women and gives voice to their experiences of making with yarn and sharing through Facebook™.



### *3.1.2.1. The knotty problem of measurement*

In the limited evaluation of therapeutic factors in arts programmes for mental health contexts, social support, creative expression, self-confidence and management of anxiety (Margrove, Heydinryck and Secker, 2012; Spandler et al., 2007; van de Venter and Buller, 2014) are repeatedly perceived as outcomes (see also Chapter 2 Contextual Review 2.1.1). In an attempt to improve the validity and consistency of such findings and move beyond a correlation between arts occupation and positive psychological improvements, a number of studies have worked towards ways to quantify and measure wellbeing. One example is Tennant et al. (2007) and the development of the 'Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale'. Here, quantitative analysis of data from a series of positively-worded wellbeing scale statements was used to monitor several mental health promotion initiatives, including topics such as optimism, usefulness, problem management, closeness to others, confidence and agency. The 'What Works Wellbeing' (2018) initiative is designed to encourage the capturing of data to evaluate wellbeing impact in a variety of contexts from government, to cities and voluntary organisations. The Office for National Statistics (2018) likewise shares measures in national and personal wellbeing, where the focus is on business and trade, economy, employment, community and personal happiness.

Particularly where evaluation of such outcomes inform policy, measurement is accepted as necessary, although recent work by Oman and Taylor highlight how even this may be flawed by a focus on wellbeing measured by attendance rather than participation (Oman and Taylor, 2018). In this ethnographic study, traditional quantified data has been considered unhelpful (Bochner, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 2005). Numerical measurement criteria taken from a positivist paradigm, however "open-ended and context sensitive" (Lather, 1993, p.674) would not support ideas of value in participant voice, but reduce the detail of personal, subjective experience shared in this research to impersonal findings. Moreover, to quantify and metricise the nuanced, reflective and frequently personal data shared in the study was felt to be intrusive and in conflict with the ethics of care and respect for participants and therefore inappropriate: From the outset, participants were informed that their stories and opinions were of the utmost significance and to introduce a scale measurement to translate this in some way would be to trivialise their contributions: This may have



reinforced the imbalance of power in a hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant and indicated that the original terms of participant engagement were not respected.

The focus of this thesis is on the exploration of subjective perceptions of wellbeing through making by hand and therefore coding has been constructed following thematic analyses of meaning as constructed by participants. The numbers which accompany explication of findings in Chapter 4 are presented simply to illustrate the commonality - or otherwise - of a particular viewpoint within the group (see also section 3.5.2 Coding Phases, below). The study proudly offers a “partial view” (Smith, 1987, p.62) in keeping with its basis in social constructivism and as part of a challenge that all knowledge is partial, embodied and situated (Abu-Lughod, 1990).

The goal of this work has been to investigate the personal perceptions of these participants as they share to Facebook™ what they make in knit and crochet, not to measure differences in scales of wellbeing. It is significant to note that many participants were already part of existing Facebook™ crafting groups and all were already involved in making using knit and crochet. The act of making was not a new intervention where differences in subjective wellbeing could be defined, but an existing practice where focused reflection for research was being invited. This study has attempted to fulfil broader criteria about best practice in qualitative research whilst embracing the flexibility appropriate for this model of participation in a specific context where the focus is on gathering the subjective responses of participants about their experience rather than monitoring discrete outcomes in an intervention (Dooris, et al, 2017) and where the benefits of making are largely accessible only through narrative accounts (Moreton, 2012b). Largely, the model proffered by Tracy (2010) in her significant article on criteria for excellent qualitative research has been used as a cornerstone in reflecting on the worthiness of this study in an Academy where values for quality are more often expressed in positivist terms such as validity, replicability and measurement. Tracy celebrates the ways that methods and data which do not follow a positivist paradigm may be valued through a flexible model of research which is timely, multi-vocal, shows rigour, sincerity, credibility, respects ethical procedures and offers a coherent and significant contribution.



### 3.1.3. A Feminist Mindset

Whilst not a research methodology in itself, feminist qualitative approaches are employed in this study. The project has sought from its inception to work towards redressing the ‘asymmetry’ of power in research practice, focusing on exploring the experience of participants who self-identified as women with “conscious partiality” (Mies, 1993, p.68). The documentation of women’s everyday lives remains under-represented or marginalised in communities - including the Academy (Reinharz and Davidson, 1992).

Skeggs has posited that ethnography and participant observation may lend itself to feminist approaches, “with its emphasis on experiences, and the words, voice and lives of the participants” (2001, p.430). The research seeks to transparently acknowledge the values and biases of a deliberate focus on feminist research, identifying with participants and engaging with women through reciprocal support in digital and physical communications. This resonates with Code (1991) and Welch (2006) in celebrating the commitment in feminist research approaches to collective and subjective - rather than detached and objective - ways of knowing, particularly in the forms of knowledge women have constructed from their lived experience.

Hogan and Pink (2010) have likewise suggested that exploring the crafted object in ethnographies related to art therapy can be perceived as a feminist approach. Whilst the study is not focused on forms of therapy *per se*, there are connections between notions of crafting for wellness and art therapy, as indicated in Chapter 2.1.3 (Women’s Wellbeing – Research in Art and Making Therapies). As image sharing is a key element within the affordances of the Facebook™ platform, interesting visual aspects to the ethnography can be observed in participants use of images of their making – in progress and as completed objects, or of themselves situated in their places of making (see more on this in section 3.2.3 Visual Ethnography). Hogan and Pink’s work celebrates and respects the ontological status of emotion and experience - particularly through the act of making – as it offers a glimpse of the self in process:

interiority might be considered not simply as something that comes to the surface and is ... crystallised and made static, but rather, and importantly, it offers ways of understanding interiority through an anthropological



paradigm that views inner states as being in progress, rather than ever static (Hogan and Pink, 2010, p.160)

This concept helpfully draws together key ideas in the principles behind the current study – that women participants’ personal and situated perceptions (Haraway, 1988) about their wellbeing through making in yarn and sharing on Facebook™ are rich and valid, providing insight into everyday experiences of crafting and sharing.

The study also recognises the complexity of representing women’s voices as they express their views on wellbeing, knit and crochet, and sharing on Facebook™. Cheryl Buckley (1999) expresses this tension in asking

How can one write about the place and significance of this type of design within women’s lives without merely replicating value systems that contribute to its marginalisation? (Buckley, 1999, p.55)

The researcher is mindful of the responsibility in interpreting data loaded with personal and situated meaning, understanding that it contains valuable perspectives on women’s creative lives.

### 3.1.4. Summary

The thinking behind this thesis is founded on principles of social constructivism and that subjective perceptions of participants have value. These perceptions are mediated not only through representing the self in a research setting, but additionally so in being engaged in research through Facebook™. An inductive approach has been employed, where understanding of findings has emerged over the project rather than testing set hypotheses, and interpretivism allowed the focus to be on understanding what participants convey about their perceptions of wellbeing in knit and crochet or sharing digitally. Following in this vein, the study did not seek to measure changes in perceptions of wellbeing but instead explored personal views qualitatively, reflecting on the subjective experience of participants already engaged in knit and crochet and largely with other Facebook™ yarn craft groups.



Working within the 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' members employed ethnographic practices which focused on the yarn craft of practices of those who identified as women and on women's views of their experiences in making. This feminist perspective acknowledges the responsibility of representing women's voices not often heard in the Academy.

### 3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The following section will explore the elements of the research design. This was a study informed by ethnographic practices, rather than 'an ethnography', as complete immersion in the lives of participants was not a pre-requisite of the data collection, nor possible in the varied contexts of a digital setting (see 3.2.2 below). The researcher set up a closed Facebook™ group named 'The Woolly Wellbeing Research Group', which meant that the group page could be found but the details within it were only visible to members of the group. Participants who identified as women were engaged through promotion on other Facebook™ knit and crochet groups, Twitter and popular craft blogs (see Appendix 2). The researcher posted a regular research question to facilitate discussion on wellbeing, knit and crochet, as well as discussing issues regarding research ethics (see Appendix 3). Text-based and visual data was actively gathered from February 2015 to August 2016, using participant responses to research questions and wider discussions arising in the group.

Data was coded iteratively, using in vivo coding using phrases taken directly from participant comment and followed by focused coding to establish intriguing foci for analysis. The conceptual categories generated through this process were then explored in the light of different criteria for wellbeing, such as that from the New Economics Foundation (2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011) - as defined in Section 2.1.1. Some Key Definitions - in order to investigate the patterns and paradoxes shared by women involved in the project.

#### 3.2.1. Why Ethnography

Whilst located in a digital setting, this study is not precisely a 'netnography' as defined by Kozinets (2015) as this has a specific research position of quantifying archetypes of



network structures across a range of devices or platforms and research practices in exploring a critique of notions of a digital community which is unstable and fragmented. Certainly, established elements of digital or virtual ethnography are employed, where dialogue with participants has been conducted ‘online’ and data collected on the reasons why participants engage with social media platforms. However, neither is this study straightforwardly ethnographic: It is not focused on a naturalistic community, but one deliberately constructed to investigate the embedded, quotidian practices of both hand crafting in knit or crochet and sharing making on Facebook™; It invited participants to actively reflect on such practices and their impact on wellbeing rather than exclusively observing them in situ.

Therefore, the researcher has operated as a ‘participant observer’ in the spirit of ethnographic research – with a willingness to become involved in the social group as it developed as a digital community on Facebook™ - but questions and guided members to reflect, critique and consider the impact of their actions. Engaging directly with participants as they shared and commented on each other’s making allowed investigation of the ways in which women attribute meaning to the things they make and how behaviours and actions are aligned to those of others in the group (Cohen et al, 2011; Bryman, 2012).

This was a shared world, with engagement in the closed Facebook™ group offering the emic perspective of the insider yet also attempting to balance the power and critical distance of the etic outsider. D’Andrade’s (1992) focus on a shared social culture “behaviourally enacted.... internally thought” (p.230), with the potential to pass cultural skill and knowledge onto other group members has resonance in studying a group operating on a social media platform.

‘Woolly Wellbeing Research’ was transparently constructed as a closed Facebook™ group - convened and moderated by the researcher for the purpose of PhD study. Regular reference was made to research progress, the ethics of participation in a group convened for study rather than leisure (see also 3.3 below: Ethics in Digital Settings) and some of the early themes generated in exploring what it means to make in yarn and share in such a group. In addition, the researcher shared her own knit or crochet handcraft and reflected on the impact it had on her wellbeing. This world was





sufficiently clear and familiar to members as something to which they were already likely (but not exclusively) to belong. Ashworth (1995) highlights the necessity of this in ethnographic work as part of the attunement to the knowledge and emotions of participants, fostering a

current of mutuality that, from the moment of coming into being, links the person with others and is lived as an understanding that their action is meaningful (Ashworth, 1995, p.373)

However, the limitations of residence, temporal and physical location (Van Maanen, 1982) are acknowledged with participation based in a digital setting. This is discussed further in section 3.2.2 (Ethnography in Digital Settings) below.

A focus on ethnography with the feminist mindset identified above is also designed to reduce the hierarchical power imbalance as participatory practices can engage participants in dialogue through research partnerships. It is predicated on the principles of “far more participation and less observation, of being with and for the ‘other’. Not looking at” (de Laine, 2000, p.16), or working alongside participants to generate research with the group, not on it (McLaren 1991) – seeking and submitting to knowledge of group members to develop key research questions and reflect the voices and concerns of participants. To this end, the researcher posted not only research questions, but shared images of and comments on her own practices of making, responded as a group member and shared personal stories of the impact knit and crochet continued to have on her wellbeing. All other instances of researcher interaction in the closed Facebook™ group may be observed in Appendix 4.

Such an ethnographic approach is particularly suitable for practices which are based on sharing yarn-making: As Pink and Leder-Mackley (2011) suggest, ethnography rooted in sharing the fabric of a textile is an appropriate route for learning of inner states, dialogue and emotion as perceptions can be “stimulated by the different qualities of the [...] materials their tactile qualities, and the way they are manipulated” (Pink and Leder-Mackley, 2011, p16). Using this ethnographic approach, the researcher has been invited through the medium of a social media platform into intimate interiors, filled with comforting blankets and nightwear, tea and wine, where women use a digital ‘place’ to present the hand-made as key to their personal and group identities (Turner





& Onorato, 1999; Cruwys, Haslam, J., Dingle, Haslam, C. and Jetten, 2014). Participants have posted status updates and photographs to share their 'work-in-progress' and completed craft objects 'hot off the hook' or needles. Patterns and advice were sought, soothing positive transactional strokes of accomplishment provided, and creative making has been celebrated. Members reflected on crafting in different spaces in the home and outside, using knit and crochet for social activism and creating either a nostalgic link to past generations (Myzelev, 2009) or establishing new traditions. They shared frustrations of the unfinished (Clarke and Connors, 2012) and made together in digital 'sit and stitch' events. Details of this data are examined in Chapters 4 (Presentation of Findings) and 5 (Discussion) and represent an attempt to attend to "the fragments, the voices and stories that are otherwise passed over or ignored... and pay them the courtesy of serious attention" (Back, 2013, p.1).

### 3.2.2. Ethnography in Digital Settings

There are additional considerations in locating this ethnographic research in the digital social world. Issues here have included settings separated by geography or time zones, asynchronous exchanges as members respond to posts at a time (or in a time zone) appropriate to them, and where participant membership is fluid, changing over the course of the projects as participants engage or decide to remain invisible online (Baym, 2015; Clemens, 2014; Hine, 2015). This is in contrast to the traditionally established parameters of a fixed time, location and group, where an ethnographic study is boundaried by a synchronous setting and a more certain sense of physical participant membership. Attempting to ameliorate the impact of the researcher in digital ethnography, managing dominant participant voices, and striving to identifying ambiguity in computer mediated communication are all challenging. However, Capurro and Pingel (2002) point out that there are parallels between digital ethnography and any similar study in the physical world and attempting to analyse the implications of a Facebook™ post may be as inscrutable and challenging to read 'online' as any exchange 'offline': Hine (2015) reassures us that the uncertainty in analysing what is being represented through the digital world remains as much as part of the ethnographer's role as it ever was.



When one of our informants updates his status on Facebook™, he may tell us what he meant by it, but we cannot be quite sure what his friends make of what he writes [...] any more than, as Geertz (1973) reminds us, we can understand from observation of the action alone what is meant when we see someone close one eye to wink (Hine, 2015, p.3)

Debating and defending social media as a valid arena for ethnographic research and particularly reframing the faceless user who creates an alternative identity in cyberspace as an holistic being has long been the focus of academics in the digital sphere. It is particularly in the field of early studies of the internet that a lack of trust in the veracity of online identity can be observed. The idea that an alternative 'virtual' identity, different from that in the physical world, could be performed online muddies the waters in considering the trustworthiness of the data being collected or from whom consent is 'really' being gained. Believing that participants make new and different personae reconstructed "on the other side of the looking glass" (Turkle, 1995, p.177) or use digital space to experiment and play with identity significantly discontinuous (Robinson and Schulz, 2009) from the physical contributes to the binary separation of 'real life' participant versus virtual simulacrum. To seek permission to explore this range of new or false identities (Rheingold, 2000) as a basis for research has been seen by some as reckless (Fritch and Cromwell, 2001).

However, Baym expressed the view that "most social users of computer-mediated communication create online selves consistent with their offline identities" (1998, p. 45); Wellman and Gulia saw participants' engagement in social media communication as "an integral part of expressing one's self-identity" (1999, p.73). Capurro and Pingel perceived "a tension, not a dichotomy" (2002, p.190) in the consideration of digital or physical identities, as one's identity may be projected in different ways in the digital medium but will still remain connected to the embodied user. Similarly, Lüders expresses concern over the binary view of on/offline identity which focuses on searching for differences "rather than on the embodied realness of online behaviours [...] as an integral part of life" (2015, p.80). Ess (2013) and Nissenbaum (2011) both posit that online behaviour is rooted in our physical, social lives.



Nevertheless, shortcomings in situating an ethnographic study on Facebook™ is acknowledged: Focus on the images, written posts and comments provided by participants may miss informative features such as gesture or tone of voice to convey particular emotions. In addition, comments were frequently crafted, extensive and occasionally edited, creating data which may be more akin to a semi-structured interview than a 'naturalistic' response. That the response of participants therefore may be reactive or adjusted to create a particular representation 'for research' is accepted (Webb, 1981). However, this is balanced by what may be gained in communicating with a significant number of participants over an extended time and in a manner which participants felt comfortable with. The group was developed as a safe space where participants could communicate ideas that they may not have felt possible to share in person and were able to return to comments to add, clarify and edit their responses if desired. This opportunity - to evaluate, alter, expand (and even delete) posts and comments is perceived as an important element of participant agency in choosing how one is represented in research.

### 3.2.3. Visual Ethnography

Whilst all ethnography is likely to be visual to some degree, it is acknowledged that the digital location of this study means that appropriate attention needs to be drawn to the use of images (Hand, 2017). Photographs uploaded to accompany - or in some cases, stand alone as – posts were thoughtfully selected by participants to communicate something about their making or themselves. Reflection and editing of images was also encouraged by the researcher as part of an ethic of care for participants' protection: For example, participants were reminded of the potential for images to be traceable, in addition to being used in research and therefore to consider whether to include a recognisable image of the face in photographs. Uploaded photographs were more likely to be of hands presenting work, making held in the lap or textiles displayed on a surface.

Photographs shared within the group were participants' chosen representation of an aspect of their making (Pink 2007). Such images were considered and selected, potentially cropped, enhanced, filtered or otherwise edited and therefore provided rich data in illustrating thinking or provoking responses in other participants and the



researcher (Boellstorf, Nardi, Pearce and Taylor, 2012), but must also be understood as having “elements of selection and contrivance” (Drew and Guillemin, 2014, p56; Yates, 2010). For many participants, using photographs to shape a representation of visual culture in their everyday life was an embedded practice (Pink, 2013), not particular to the Facebook™ platform, but certainly supported by its affordances. Mirzoeff (2002) posits that visual media such as digital photographs can be perceived as part of a social network formulation, although the development of Web 2.0 embedded practices in creating digital content have developed considerably over the previous fifteen years. However, the phenomenological approach developed by Pink (2013; 2015; Pink and Leder-Mackley, 2011) is not being claimed in this study, as sharing images was presented in the group as an optional activity, with the dominant mode of engagement being written comment.

Rather, images in this study are used in analysis as they have been used by participants – as additional insight into the topic under discussion and as an alternative mode of conveying ideas. The construction of the images – focused on the hand crafted object and unlikely to show the face – is an example of the ways that users differentiate their use of Facebook™ (Miller and Sinanen, 2017) when documenting making in a digital archive shared with a specific and separate community. Images were often used to bring the researcher and other group members into a home environment, making visible the materiality of yarn craft, inviting an imagination of touch and indicating what was most significant to participants (Fors, Backstrom and Pink, 2013). In this study, elements of the visual are integrated into the findings shared in Chapter 4 with separate examples of expanded illustration of themes in Appendix 10b.

There are under-researched complexities here, as highlighted by Chapman, Wu and Zhu (2017) in their work exploring images created by participants in the research process which are not part of researcher-generated exercises such as photo-voice or photo-elicitation, but those shared by participants as part of their communication with others in the ethnographic context. To mitigate against inherent bias of the researcher in exploring the participant’s viewpoint, the ‘interpretive engagement’ framework explicated by Drew and Guillemin (2014; Guillemin and Drew, 2010) was employed, considering what participants have wanted the researcher to observe, an examination of image, reflecting on patterns, potential themes or codes and working conceptually



to consider analytical explanations. Throughout this process, there has been careful awareness of assumptions and inherent biases in the researcher perspective, in an attempt to address the challenges in behaving both ethically and critically when dealing with images (Yates, 2010; Drew and Guillemin, 2014). Further information about the coding of images can be found in section 3.5.2 (Coding Phases) below.

### 3.2.4. Summary

This thesis employed ethnographic practices in engaging with participants through sharing accounts of wellbeing through knit and crochet with mutual interest but it not a 'netnography' (Kozinets, 2015): There were some key differences in conducting this research in a digital setting, with a flexible understanding of what ethnographic features were demonstrated in group membership, place and time. Communication shared through the Facebook group was perceived as an embedded practice, integrated with and not separate from the physical lives of participants and therefore consistent with expectations of how an ethnographic study may take place in digital space. Visual material in shared photographs formed part of the analyses, being treated as illustration of written text but is not explored separately within the parameters of this research.

## 3.3. ETHICS IN DIGITAL SETTINGS

The ethics of any participatory research are complex: There are tensions which need to be resolved as "'insider' research can be ... problematic and raise(s) issues of the balance of power, ownership and voice, anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent" (Burton, Bundrett and Jones, 2009, p.51). There are potential dilemmas in the "asymmetry" (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011, p.78) of a context where the researcher is "familiar with the setting and know(s) the actors within it" (Burton et al, 2009, p.54). Confidentiality is paramount in research relationships where "trust, and the closeness it engenders, facilitates access to deeper ... taboo, layers" (Bergold and Thomas, 2012, para.105) as personal identity and self-expression is explored. However, where research takes place in a digital setting, there are significant challenges in what may be meant by trust, confidentiality and privacy.



This study has sought to address the need for rigorous good practice in these aspects of ethics in digitally-based research - as identified in the 2014 National Centre for Social Science Research report (Beninger et al., 2014), where participants expressed concerns that consent for use of online data in research was morally right and that terms of privacy and confidentiality should have greater transparency. Research on the dilemmas of ethical practice in using social media for academic purposes remains relatively limited (Henderson, Johnson, Auld and Dawson, 2014) and is fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. The contention surrounding sources deemed publicly available in contrast to perceived as private (Rosenberg, 2010) is illustrated in the amendments by the International Council on Human Rights (2011) that one's privacy is only partly under one's own control in the world of social media communication. Participants may anticipate that posts to an open forum are public, but that a post to a personal page, or one requiring a password are private and only accessible to identified 'friends'. However, all this may be moot if they are unaware of the implications of their own out-of-date security settings or the absence of security settings for those with whom they communicate. Crucial here is the recognition of the context in which the participant originally generated data as being 'not for public consumption' and whether it should therefore be treated as private (Henderson et al, 2013).

However, current guidelines are sparse and somewhat flexible. The British Sociological Association (2017a) has recently redesigned their recommendations for social media research, adding a Digital Research Annexe (British Sociological Association, 2017b) which provides guidance for the application of situational ethics to manage the messy and complex issues frequently found in internet research. The Association of Internet Researchers provides guidance but admits tensions and ambiguities in suggesting that ethical consideration related to human subjects only may be a requirement (Markham and Buchanan, 2012). There is an extended continuum of ethical choice (James and Busher, 2015) to navigate in the effort to demonstrate academic integrity and respect for participants. Much of the contention surrounds the interpretation of the validity of digital identity and what may be perceived as public as opposed to private.

This study acknowledges the complex space - neither totally public nor wholly private (Eysenbach and Till, 2001) – in which data is collected from participants who possess a justifiable expectation of how their shared communications may be presented and



respected in research (Mayne, 2016b). Capurro and Pingel (2002) and the British Sociological Association (2017b) suggest that online communication research should be guided by an ethics of care where respect for the interests and values of the people involved in online research provides an opportunity for participants to actively consider the implications for their cooperation. This has been echoed by Henderson et al (2013) in recommending an explicit focus on ethical processes throughout research experience which reflects the context of data source, consent and confidentiality. One impact of this is the manner through which participants are identified: Discussion took place within the group, led by the researcher, about the ways that participants may be named in research. The outcome of this was a decision to use real initials (with an additional number where these were replicated) to strike a balance between academic and ethical practices of anonymisation and participants' keenness to have their names clearly identified in research. This is likewise balanced in the appendices where Appendix 5 clarifies initials and number of exchanges within the group, but Appendix 6 acknowledges thanks to the participants by their first name where they gave permission to share it. An ongoing dialogic approach (Henderson, et al., 2013) is both about creating trust within “an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual support” (Capurro and Pingel, 2002, p.193) in addition to reflecting a broader ethical process which illustrates respect for participants perceived as equal in the research relationship (Schrijvers, 1991).

Such a transparent approach has been the aim of this research, with participants actively encouraged to reflect on the implications of their engagement and on the complex ethical issues of research within a social media platform. Views on this constitute an interesting contribution to knowledge about the ethics of participation for those engaged in the project.

### 3.3.1. Summary

Ethics are complex in conducting research in digital setting and there is a need for transparency about the inability to guarantee anonymity and risks to confidentiality for participants. This study has responded to recent developments in placing value on situated ethics and participants have been iteratively informed and consent sought over the course of the project. In engaging in research on a Facebook™ closed group





which is not public nor entirely private, participants have contributed their views on ethics and further discussion of this can be found in section 5.1 (Engaging with (Digital) Research).

### 3.4. DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected from participant responses to regular questions posted to the closed 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' on Facebook™ by the researcher between February 2015 and August 2016. The style of questions was conversational in tone, personable and designed to elicit conversation. (Question posts can be seen in Appendix 3). In addition, discussions were posted to the group by participants – occasionally posing questions, asking for advice in making or presenting finished textiles and works in progress.

#### 3.4.1. Why Facebook™

Data for this research was gathered from a pragmatic and purposive sample of participants who identified as women initially invited through Twitter and Facebook™ crafting groups and expanded through word-of-mouth, retweets and sharing through craft bloggers and other Facebook™ pages. Whilst it is acknowledged that using an internet-based study has its limitations in terms of the digital divide in less developed countries (van Dijk, 2005) or the digital skills divide (Hargittai, 2011), Facebook™ remains the most popular social media platform: Figures from Pew Internet Research (Greenwood et al., 2016) indicate that 71% of US citizens engage with Facebook™, with a slightly higher figure of 77% for women. Internet World Statistics (2017) suggest that the continued popularity of Facebook™ remains global, with nearly two billion daily active users and significant growth in Africa, Asia and the Middle East between 2016 and 2017. In comparison, users of Instagram™ and Pinterest™ represent under 32% of US users (Greenwood et al., 2016), which, along with the public nature of the data and primary focus on image over text commentary, indicated they would not be a suitable vehicle for this research. Likewise, Greenwood et al. (2016) have posited that women are more likely to use Facebook™ than men. The reach of craft blogs is, by their specialist nature, more likely to be limited. For example, popular yarn craft blog Look





What I Made has over 15,000 blog subscribers in comparison to over 27,467 Facebook™ followers (Strydom, 2015). Similarly, the blog A Creative Being has over 38,000 Facebook™ followers, compared to a little over 4,000 blog subscribers (Wink, 2015).

Facebook™ therefore appeared to offer the greatest opportunity to reach a wide audience, particularly with its established tradition in enabling craft groups to share online. It offered platform affordances which supported extended dialogue with and between participants: Instagram™ has a focus of communicating through images over text and Twitter™ has a limit on word count in responses. Facebook™ has no limit to the number of comments allowed, the facility of a search function and the protocol of moving a post to the top of the group timeline where a new comment was added: All these affordances enabled participants and the researcher to engage in a multi-vocal discussions which could be returned to and extended over time. This was a key advantage compared to undertaking individual or small-group interviews at discrete times over the data collection phase of research.

From its inception, the research on Facebook™ was accessed through a ‘closed’ group. Security settings within ‘closed’ groups meant that the study could be found through searches and links, but the content would only be visible to members – a secure way of enabling a shared interest rather than shared geography (Wellman and Gulia, 1999) to facilitate engagement in research and another factor in identifying Facebook™ as the most appropriate platform for dialogue with and between participants. Facebook™ created group settings at least partly in recognition that individuals may wish to share posts with parties other than (and hidden from) family and friends (Henderson et al 2013):

Facebook™ Groups make it easy to connect with specific sets of people [...]  
Groups are dedicated spaces where you can share updates, photos or  
documents and message other group members (Facebook™, 2015)

Once a potential participant submitted a request to join the group, they were sent participant information and links to online consent forms which were completed before acceptance into the group (see Appendix 7). In order to become involved, participants had to respond to the information which highlighted the key differences in



conducting research which would be confidential in writing, but that anonymity could not be guaranteed working on a platform where members could be traced (Henderson et al 2014). Mindful of this in particular, all were offered the choice of creating a pseudonym, although only four participants elected to take this option. In addition, further documents posted in group files (see Appendix 8) and regular status updates on the topic of ethics and consent were posted by the researcher engaged participants in an explicit dialogue about informed consent and the issues of anonymity and confidentiality in social media research. Additional threads were also developed to highlight concerns regarding trolling or flaming, where the 'faceless' nature of a social media platform leads some members to post critical, cruel or inflammatory comments directed at others to put in place protocols designed to guard against negative or directly vindictive responses which could derail the community. Therefore, discussions about ethical considerations were explicit on the Facebook™ group threads – such as the need to understand that posts may be confidential within the group, but not anonymous, that members are traceable and in seeking iterative permissions for use of images used for publication or presentation. In this way, consent has been negotiated as an ongoing process throughout the study, rather than an isolated initial event.

### 3.4.2. Engagement and Participation

This sub-section unpacks the patterns in participation using the method of gathering data through the closed Facebook™ group, considering the statistics and types of engagement in the research, including an acknowledgement of limitations created through dominant voices in the group. Naturally, the integrity of participants' comments has been respected in collecting, analysing and re-presenting data. This includes the maintenance of the differences between British and American English, patterns created by participants engaging in English as an additional language and in spelling or grammatical variations. To remind the reader of this at each point would negatively affect the fluency of text, therefore using [*sic*] to identify forms which do not conform to academic practices has not been employed.



#### 3.4.2.1. Participant statistics

The membership of the Facebook™ Woolly Wellbeing Research Group was global: There were over 400 participants in both the UK and USA; Australia, Canada and South Africa each had around 20 participants – in all, the 526 women involved in the project represent 34 countries from Albania, Egypt, the Netherlands and Singapore to Zambia. In addition, 59% of research participants are in the 35-55 age group, with 27% aged 55 and older and 14% aged under 35. The Facebook™ group operated as a ‘glocalised’ community, where women were coming together in a virtual place that had significance for them. However, it is acknowledged that having an English-speaking focus and dominant membership from the United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada excludes many voices and that broader participation from a wider range of languages and cultures could provide insight into more varied or complex practices. A breakdown of membership can be seen in Figure 1 below:

Fig. 1

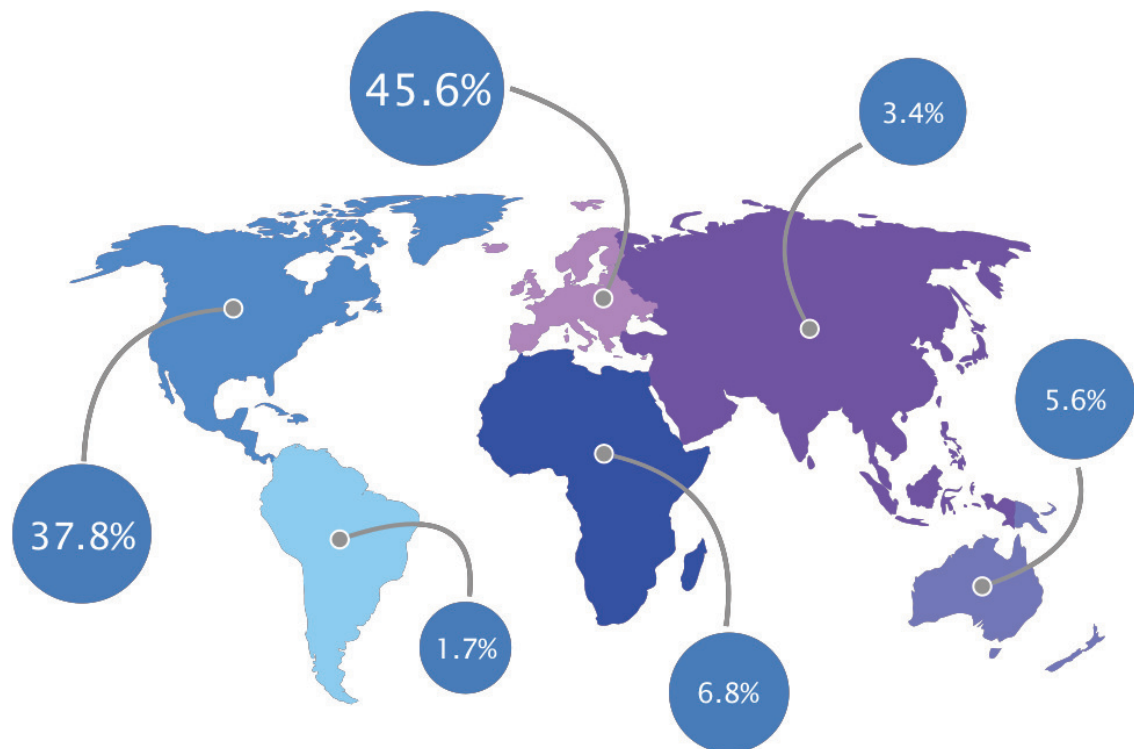


Fig. 1: Map showing geographical breakdown of membership



#### *3.4.2.2. Participant engagements*

As discussed in section 3.2 on the challenges of conducting ethnography in a digital setting, the global nature of the research group meant that there were waves of posts over a 24-hour period in differing time zones. Whilst this, in fact, may have meant that questions and responses were perhaps more likely to receive a timely response – there was always someone ‘present’ – there were challenges for the researcher in monitoring and managing comments as they were posted. The key point is that, as participants moved between archived posts and ephemeral, fleeting ‘chat’ responses, they were using the group as a means to sustain social interactions across geographical place and temporality (Baym, 2010).

The group of research participants was fluid, as discussed previously – with 324 members maintaining the group for their personal benefit at the present time (March 2018), there were a total of 526 participants in the original study, of whom 407 were active within the group: Membership was affected by women who chose to engage but then withdraw over time. Different participants engaged through different kinds of activities, including posting extensive comments, answering queries or requests for advice, and providing status updates with images of their work (see Figure 2 below). Some participants were more likely to be involved in commenting or just ‘liking’ rather than posting independently – and significantly active participants were a minority. From the participant total, 339 were ‘engaged’ – that is, they liked, commented and posted. Of course, there were members who did not visibly engage at all - the ‘lurkers’. A group constituting 26% of the participants appear to be inactive – they never liked, commented or posted to the page. Hine (2000) highlights the difficulties in managing the silent; those who are present and can see and access material, but who leave no traces to analyse. Just because some members are not observable or meaningfully present does not mean, however, that they are unimportant. Any community becomes “an elective phenomenon in which some who could participate choose not to” (Hine, 2000, p.220) and so ‘lurkers’ are acknowledged as an audience (Hine, 2000; 2015; Preece and Maloney-Krichmar, 2005).



Fig. 2

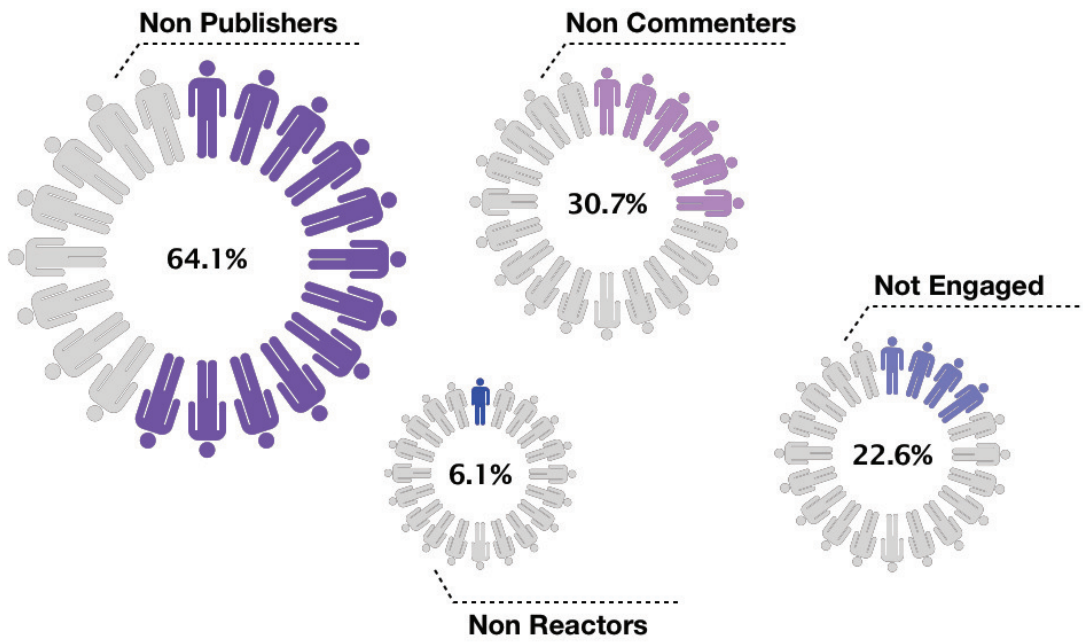


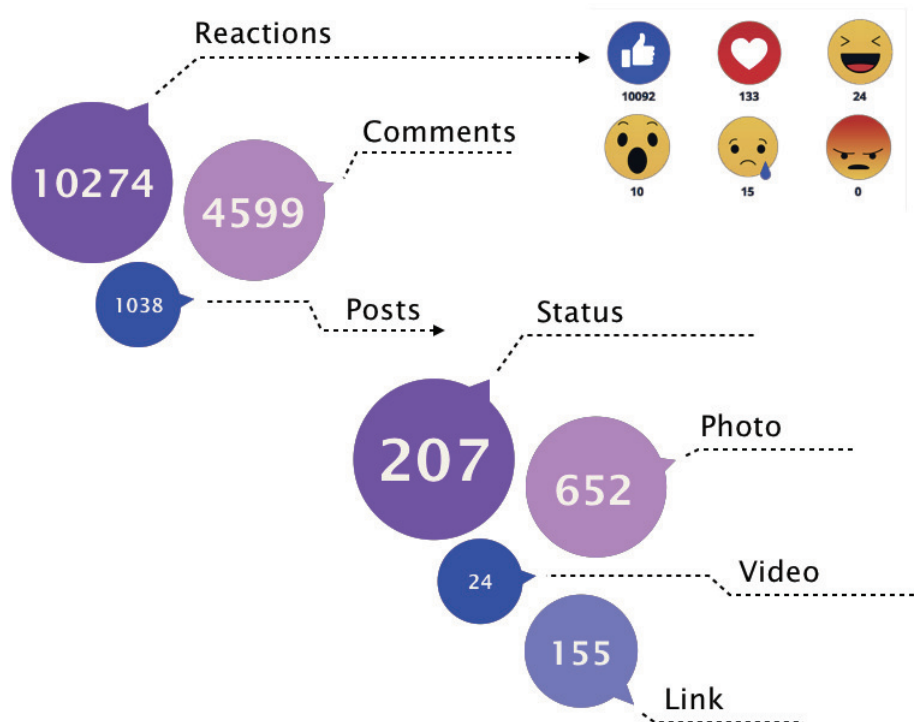
Fig. 2: Breakdown of participant engagement

Over an eighteen-month period from February 2015 through to August 2016, thirty research questions were posed by the researcher (See Appendix 3). This was usually posted weekly during an intensive period of data collection between March and October 2015. These were formed initially around aspect deriving from the varied definitions of wellbeing discussed in Chapter 2 above. For example, there were questions about the various forms of social connection that knit, crochet and sharing on social media held for participants or how hand craft made participants feel as if they were making different kinds of ‘contribution’. As the project progressed, questions were posed less frequently but responded to ideas and queries identified by participants as helpful in exploring the objectives of the research. For example, these included questions about expressing ‘love’ through hand craft, how some participants felt uncomfortable about the concept of ‘craft activism’ or what members felt they gained though sharing on Facebook compared to within a physical ‘knit and natter’



group. On three occasions, questions were posted by participants, considering places for handcraft, emotional connections with previous generations through textiles and in attitudes to colour. Whilst not a co-produced study, these are examples of participants working with agency in the research and demonstrating that they felt sufficiently engaged in the project to pose questions to facilitate data collection.

*Fig. 3*



*Fig. 3: Range of engagement*

The regular research question post from the researcher drew on average over 20 comments, with a number of posts receiving between 150 and 250 responses. In addition, the Facebook™ group functioned as an independent digital social community – one which should not be closed because the researcher had gathered data and was turning her focus to critical reflection: Following the active phase of data collection which ended in August 2016, the group has continued to function to the present time (March 2018). Three active participants now act as administrators for monitoring and encouraging posts which share and comment on yarn making. Importantly, this demonstrates that the purpose and tone of the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’



shifted over time and moved from a group explicitly focused on research for PhD study towards its own authentic community of amateur makers.

The entire engagement in the project between February 2015 and August 2017 can be visualised above in Figure 3.

### 3.4.2.3. Engaged voices

It is noted, however, that the impact of the researcher here is – as always - problematic. Operating as a participant–observer, “perceived [...] to be an in-group rather than an out-group member (i.e., understood to be ‘one of us’ and hence ‘like me’)” (Cruwys, South, Greenaway and Haslam, 2014, p.231) is crucial in developing the ethnographic focus of the Facebook™ research community group. The work was clearly identified as being for PhD study; it was the identified researcher who usually posted research questions and responded to comments, although group members increasingly posted their own perceptions about wellbeing and crafting online.

Fig. 4

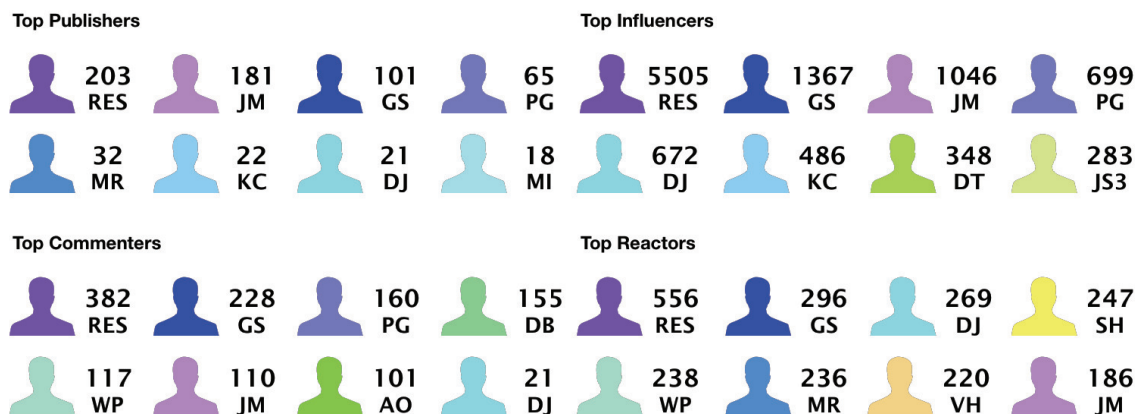


Fig. 4: Voices of engaged participants

There were, however, some interesting patterns emerging about clear voices contributing responses, beyond that of the researcher. Some participants were more prolifically engaged with the group – those who posted most frequently, those most likely to comment on others’ posts and those who were influential (that is their interactions generate the most likes or comments from the wider community). In





addition to coding and category analysis, group analytic software by Grytics (2017) was used to economically generate data regarding participant engagement, such as number of posts, comments, and influential or frequent participants. An example of this is illustrated above in Figure 4, which illustrates the top ten contributors.

As can be observed, JM is highly involved in building the community through contributing 181 posts, at a similar frequency to the engagement of the researcher who had contributed 203 posts. It is also useful to observe that GS, who is a frequent publisher of independent posts at 101 and provider of comments supporting others at 228 also generates the most responses from the community in the form of 1376 comments and reactions. Conversely, PG posts only 65 times over the project, but these generate 699 responses from others. These two participants are examples of the figure in any community where their views appear to be valued or influential. DJ posts and comments much less at 21 for each of these engagements but nearly matches GS at 269 reactions to the posts of others, representing a participant who is key in promoting self-esteem and responding with reciprocal support for other members (Cutrona and Russell, 1990; Baym, 2010). The significance of such patterns was taken into consideration when the data was analysed and is unpacked further in Chapters 4 and 5 and a breakdown of all participant engagement can be found in Appendix 5.

### 3.4.3. Summary

Data was gathered between February 2015 and August 2016 from participants who were engaged through blogs and Facebook™ groups who already crafted in knit and crochet and were invited to join the closed ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’. Facebook™ was chosen as the location for research because it was the most popular platform, especially amongst women, and had a greater reach than other platforms. The affordances of the platform also supported text-based responses and conversations through the comments feature. Of 526 members in total, 407 participants were engaged and over 10,000 comments contributed.





### 3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data elicited in this study was primarily language based, with illustration provided by visual images accompanying text or being posted independently to show finished objects or hand crafted work in progress. These materials were organised in a process of emergent, or a priori coding, in vivo coding taken from participant phrases, and focused coding to coherently organise a thematic analysis which built on the constructions of meaning which participants had shared about their experiences of making in knit and crochet and their related practice of sharing such making to Facebook™, influenced their perceptions of subjective wellbeing.

#### 3.5.1. Why Coding?

Coding is a word or phrase which assigns an attribute to support the categorisation of linguistic or visual data and which provides a link between observation and “concrete instances of meaning” (Saldana, 2016, p.6) Of course, codes are generated by the researcher, who is translating and interpreting attributed meanings (Vogt et al, 2014) but these are valuable in identifying patterns or commonalities in the steps towards building understanding. Lincoln and Guba (1985) accept the subjective nature of coding for collected data, in identifying patterns which intuitively “look alike... feel alike” (p.347). Madden (2010) posits that this approach can add value to the research narrative as it distils the data, refining and filtering key concepts. Similarly, Fuller and Goriunova (2014) champion coding as a tool to identify and explore rigorous, evocative analysis as the patterns highlighted demonstrate their importance in participants’ everyday lives. Such codes can be initially fluid rather than fixed, responding to key ideas and picking up on juxtapositions in the data. This has been of value where coding has been used to highlight paradoxes and inconsistencies appearing in contrast to common patterns and thereby challenging assumptions present in interpretation (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011).

Repeated and significant ideas generated by participants which rose to the surface (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003) were identified as key, but not quantified – such an exercise would reduce but not amplify (Sandelowski, Voils and Knafl, 2009) the enquiry. Similarly, Harding (2013) suggests that a code shared by circa one quarter of



participants merited consideration, but as Charmaz (2014) clarifies, occasionally a unique instance in the data may contain a significant contribution to understanding. This has been of especial importance where contradictions to the literature or to the dominant narrative in the group have been shared by a participant. Further discussion regarding quantification can be found above in 3.1.2.1 (The knotty problem of measurement).

Just as the wording of research questions reveals subjectivities, so can the interpretation and analysis. However, the aim of using coding in this study is, as Charmaz (2014) indicates, to create the bones from which the skeleton of a working analysis can be built. There are flaws in any research design: To some extent, the wording of research questions will have established conceptual parameters for responses; participants may have felt constrained by question wording and the filter which this may have placed on responses could potentially limit results. However, this is acknowledged as an issue for any language-based data collection process. In an attempt to ameliorate the impact of such shortcomings, the codes selected are from data ranging across all posts and comments, including those not directly connected to a researcher-posed question.

### 3.5.2. Coding Phases

An early informal phase of coding was the use of 'word clouds' shared with participants where all responses from a particular research question were collated, stripped of personal information such as names and uploaded to [www.wordclouds.com](http://www.wordclouds.com) (n.d), with results shared with participants. A simple visualisation is created, with the frequency of a specific word reflected in its size and degree of boldness in print. One example - based on a discussion about sharing making on social media - can be found below in Figure 5, with all word clouds shared with participants available in Appendix 9.

Whilst the original motivation for this process was to communicate interesting connections to participants, it also served to as an initial coding phase to identify patterns and pick up on common threads in responses which would become useful in generating a vocabulary for later, more focused coding.





was tactile textiles, the coding process regarding visual images also requires unpacking (Catalani and Minkler, 2012). The shared digital image was perceived by participants as embedded in the everyday – part of their “contemporary reality” (Pink, 2013, p.31) and was used to communicate nuanced thinking about materials and craft. Participants shared pictures of their making, their places of making and occasionally of themselves. As suggested in the work of Chapman et al (2017), shared participant generated images were grouped using the *a priori* codes developed through analysis on linguistic text, as part of the commitment to enfranchise participants in creating meaning and conveying what was of personal significance to them. Language based data was generated using intuitive, interpretive lens to accompany the visual data (Gee, 2011; Charmaz, 2014) with categories including home, gifts, celebration, work-in-progress and seeking help. Whilst there are other possible approaches to analysing digital images, there are few established academic methods for doing so (Miller and Sinanan, 2017; Rose, 2016). Images were primarily used in this study to complement or illustrate concepts expressed through written language in Facebook™ posts, with participants indicating their own interpretation of the image in the accompanying text. There are potential flaws in the researcher’s coding and interpretation of image as of text as discussed previously. It is acknowledged, therefore, that the images shared by participants have a rich story to tell in their own right.

### 3.5.3. Qualitative Thematic Analysis

Once coding had been clarified, each conceptual section of data was considered inductively, with key assertions (Erikson, 1986) and an analytical narrative developed in the light of the initial research questions. These patterns and themes were shared with and expanded upon by participants (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016) which led on occasion to further question posts and clarifications made by group members to more clearly crystallise key aspects of the study.

Thematic analysis is a suitable approach for this study because of its emphasis on meaning inferred by a pattern of recurrent experiences (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000). In particular, the focus in this method of developing concepts directly from participant phrases communicated in dialogue with the researcher (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) resonates with the broad ethical stance of the project as a whole. Based on the multi-



vocal nature of the study, a range of themes were formulated which were then integrated to thread together a coherent narrative about participants' experiences of making and sharing in their everyday experiences (van Manen, 1990).

Holding the research questions of

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?
- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?

themes generated as outcomes of the coding process (Saldana, 2016) were built around the ways that participants constructed meaning from their experiences of making. They focused on the social connections that it built and their pleasure in both a tactile activity of making alone and engaging with others through sharing such making in a digital space. Notably, there was challenge to this narrative, leading to a key theme which explored the 'dark' side of knit and crochet where wellbeing was unfavourably affected through making. In addition, themes were identified which explored participants' views of an ethical research process in digital space.

The findings and discussion of these inferences and relationships between them form the following two chapters.

#### 3.5.4. Summary

The range of data provided in this study included participant comments, posts and images of making. These were organised into 'word clouds' to share back to group members and which also provided early in vivo coding using participant phrases. The coding became more focused through the generation of themes built on inductive analyses of participants' experiences expressed in text-based responses. Images, whilst not the central focus of the study, were used to illustrate supporting concepts. These aspects were used to organise analysis in exploring perceptions of wellbeing



which both resonated with current academic debate concerning creative making and its beneficial impact and chimed against it.

### 3.6 ON REFLEXIVITY

Nencel (2014) emphasises that reflexivity has both epistemological and methodological implications, entangling how knowledge is learned and how it may be performed.

There is a need to acknowledge the researcher's own frame of reference and how this may impact on analysis and whilst this may make the researcher feel vulnerable, it can also be an asset (Davids, 2014) in clarifying the situatedness of the study. This resonates with Behar (1996) in writing that

aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and more particularly, the topic being studied (p.13)

Whilst every individual's instance of mental ill health is particular, there were influential connections between the researcher and participants. The research concept and location in digital space was rooted in the personal experience of using knit and crochet to calm and soothe anxiety and in turning to Facebook™ to find companionship with other makers. The participants were purposive, in being invited to be part of the study because they were engaged in the same practices and had stories to tell about how this enhanced their wellbeing. As a result, it was important to support the reflexivity of not just the researcher, but likewise participants, for - as Wilkinson (1988) puts it - "both are in the construing business" (p.493). Question posts were designed to support the dynamic and agentic process of reflection for participants in inviting consideration of where views originated, their effect on the maker and occasionally their challenges to a more dominant narrative. Reflections are not fixed, however, and the interactions between researcher and participants or between participants in the research process will have influenced perspectives over the course of the study (Anzaldua, 2002; Gemignani, 2017).

Dean (2017) comments that the purpose of reflexivity



is not to make the research objective, it is to make clear the subjectivities and to understand how they may have affected both the collection and interpretation of data (Dean, 2017, p.44)

Throughout this chapter, awareness of subjectivities has been highlighted, alongside an acknowledgement that awareness alone may not ameliorate its impact – and this awareness that continues in the interpretation of data to be found in Chapter 5 – Discussion. This study has taken place in the social realm and within a social media platform design for social sharing. In order to meaningfully examine participants' experiences, the research relationship is necessarily an embedded one, rather than remaining an 'outsider', observing participants as in a snow globe (Khan, 2011). There is a thoughtful balance to be struck, as Back (2013) provides the reminder that to be partisan to the stories of participants "does not exclude a critical orientation to it" (p. 8), and Tracy (2016) urges researchers to be aware of "blind spots" (p.22) in personal relationships and academic scholarship which may have impact on interpretation in research.

In accepting the role of personal attachment within ethnographic observation, along with the emotional demands and complexities that brings (Blackman, 2007; Kara, 2015; Dean, 2017), there is a weight of accountability in speaking for others: Telling their stories, offering analysis of the implications and managing increased personal awareness of the subject can be a discomforting and exposing experience (Richardson, 2000a). Such ideas do not ameliorate power dynamics, however: The researcher still takes the position of interpreter and gives voice to research participants' views (Lather, 2001) and therefore a key part of reflexive method is to take on the responsibility of representing such views fairly in an a way which highlights their agency.

The feminist mindset discussed in section 3.1.4 above is also influential here, with academics including Oakley (2016) and Skeggs (2001) embracing how subjectivity may gain greater insight and understanding through participant and researcher coming to know one another. Wilkinson (1988) emphasises that acknowledging the connections made in this dialogue between researcher and participants can serve to illuminate the experiences of the women involved rather than essentialising or reinforcing inequalities. She also celebrates that self-reflection on such connections is a central





tenet in feminist work, where research is so often an expression of values rooted in personal concerns. As indicated in the first chapter, this study has been shaped by lived experience on mental ill-health and recovery through knit, crochet and sharing through social media platforms. It is recognised that this inevitably shapes how concepts are then created in analysis and knowledge in constructed (Davids, 2014; Wilkinson, 1988).

### 3.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The central research questions for this study are

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?
- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?

This chapter examined the methodological approach of social constructivism, focusing on how participants make meaning in their everyday lives and acknowledging the rich subjectivity of both participant and researcher. A justification of an inductive, interpretive stance was offered, alongside an explanation of why measurement and quantisation were not deemed appropriate for the study. Ideas about ethnography were then unpacked – as part of a feminist mindset and as suitable for research into groups located in digital settings. Explanation of participant engagement and data collection within the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research’ group on Facebook™ was provided, prior to discussion about approaches to coding. The chapter closed with a consideration of researcher reflexivity.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) described qualitative researchers as “bricoleurs, as makers of quilts” (p.4). Embracing this link to textiles and women’s making, it can also be expanded by considering Weinstein and Weinstein’s (1991) description of a bricoleur as an interpretivist, narrating a “pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation” with the result being an emergent “construction” (p.161). This study interprets the stories and comments shared by

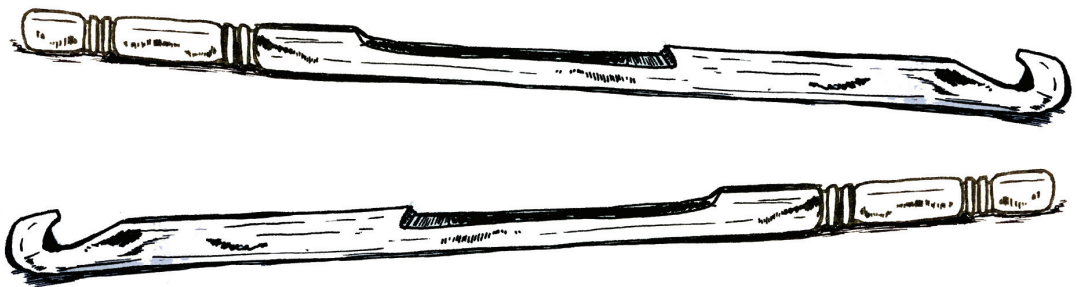


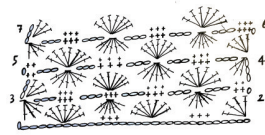


participants, constructing meaning which holds no claim to empirical replicability, but values the worth of representing their voices in the Academy. The understanding drawn out through this methodological approach is contingent and situated (Haraway, 1988) – features which contribute to its robust and rich nature.

The explicit focus on ethics within the research process - in particular the ongoing, dialogic nature of discussing the nature of informed consent with participants – was an important consideration in this study. It is a response to calls for a more deliberate and transparent consideration of the complexities of ethical research within digital spaces (Armstrong et al, 2014; Beninger et al, 2014; Henderson, Johnson and Auld, 2013) and is therefore claimed as a contribution to knowledge about how this may be designed.

The following chapter presents the bricolage of findings, organised by the themes generated through qualitative analysis related to ways that sharing one's making by hand in knit and crochet may enhance wellbeing whilst also presenting participant voices which contradict such categories.





## 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

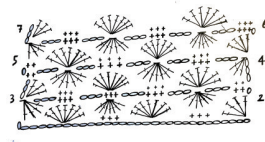
*( ): work instructions between parentheses in place as directed*

The previous chapters provided a context for this study: Chapter Two highlighted the ways that wellbeing may be interpreted and how wellbeing through arts therapies, textile making and the crafts of knit and crochet specifically may contribute positively to perceptions of wellbeing. Attitudes to amateur craft making and women's amateur hand craft were explored, with a particular focus on why women may be motivated to engage in knit and crochet. Finally, the setting of communities of interest or practice on social network platforms such as Facebook™ was presented, considering how both perceptions of wellbeing and sharing of the process and product of yarn craft could be supported in digital space. Chapter 3 presented the methodological approach for the study, rooted in social constructivism and drawing on practice from the interpretivist, feminist and ethnographic fields. The ethics of ongoing participant engagement is also central to how the study was conducted and reflections on this process can be observed in this findings chapter.

Findings respond to the aims of the study in exploring how knit and crochet may have an impact on the perceptions of subjective wellbeing of amateur craftswomen as they make alone and share their making on Facebook. The research seeks a better understanding of the everyday practices of knit or crochet experienced through the haptic and the digital. It considers whether the embedded nature of sharing hand crafted making on a social media platform like Facebook™ can enhance feelings of wellbeing. In using Facebook™ as a way to engage, communicate with and elicit data, this work also aims to explore participant views on ethics of the research process in a digital setting.

The research questions are

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?

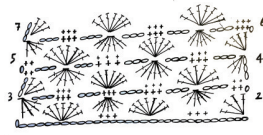


- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?

The findings presented in this chapter illustrate participants' responses to the experience of being involved in research, the ways that knit, crochet and sharing on a social media platform can enhance subjective perceptions of wellbeing and conversely, how there may also be a 'dark side' to such making which impacts negatively on participants. Each section is punctuated by a '*Woolly Wellbeing Story*' gifted by a participant for this purpose.

Firstly, participant views on the ethics of privacy in conducting research in digital space are presented, connected to reflections on what engaging in the project has meant for some members. Next, interpretations of what 'wellbeing' represents to participants is provided as a context for the data which follows. After this, themes generated through qualitative analysis are presented. These include the positive implications for subjective wellbeing perceived by women as they find social connection through a sense of belonging within a group of fellow makers or in real or imagined connections with other women makers in the family. Feeling a sense of agency - in perceiving oneself as productive or managing one's own self care is also a key factor in perceptions of wellbeing for women who knit and crochet alone but who share what they have made to Facebook™. Creativity and pleasure in not only hand crafting with texture, color and design but also finding joy in keeping or 'stashing' yarn for knit and crochet inspiration is similarly influential in enhancing makers' wellbeing. However, there are also limitations and contradictions in the impact experienced by participants in this study, some of whom identified a 'darker' side to their making and sharing practices which could exacerbate or introduce loneliness, pain and distress. It is particularly in these negative implications for subjective wellbeing of knit, crochet and sharing on Facebook™ where an original contribution to knowledge in this research is claimed.

With over one thousand posts and four thousand comments, as presented in 3.4.2.2 above, the data presented here is by necessity selective, chosen for its potential to illustrate an idea, encapsulate an often-repeated response or provide a foil which



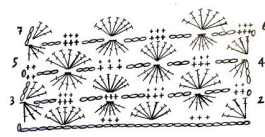
contrasts with the dominant messages built up over the coding process. In the bricolage of where a collective response is claimed, numbers of common participant voices responding to a research topic are provided. Expanded illustrative evidence consisting of more extensive quotations and images shared when considering concepts of wellbeing are presented in Appendix 10, to allow the reader to reflect on and hear more fully the voice of women engaged in the study.

It is worthy of note here that in a thread discussing interpretations posited by academics on reasons why women make by hand, one participant dismissed the reading thus:

I'd say that writers are pretty good at attempting to lump "women who knit/crochet" together into a homogeneous lump - and I find it incredibly patronising (SR)

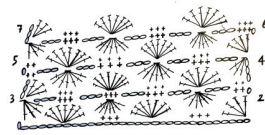
This serves as a salutary reminder to be open to a variety of perspectives and pay attention to differing voices in addition to the broader chorus. It is beneficial to recall that the data presented in this project is intended to explore the experience of this particular group of participants and to respectfully represent their perspectives, rather than assuming homogeneity in all views on wellbeing through yarn craft.

In addition, the reader is reminded that all there is a glossary of terms on p.xi in Appendix 1 and that as participant comments retain their integrity, identification of variations in grammar or spelling have not been highlighted by *[sic]*.



## A Woolly Wellbeing Story - RL

*For me I mainly crochet and knit because it keeps the demons in my head at bay a little. I've suffered from depression for about 10 years now. It did get to the point once that I sat here and wrote letters to those I loved and had a bottle of tablets beside me. A dear friend (sadly no longer here) phoned about something else, realised what was happening and managed to talk me out of it. I got treatment for the depression and started to sort myself out. Christmas 2011 saw me spend a weekend with my Gran. Although she suffered from arthritis in her hands she spent time patiently teaching me the basics of crocheting, something I'd always wanted to learn. Sadly she died 6 months later and the demons started to return. I found sitting crocheting and knitting help so much. I don't have so much time to think the bad thoughts, love the sense of achievement it brings and I feel I am contributing to carrying on a wonderful tradition. Don't get me wrong, I still get the bad days, and it isn't just the craft that's helped, BUT it has played a big part in keeping me sane!*



#### 4.1. VIEWS ON ETHICS AND PARTICIPATION IN DIGITAL RESEARCH

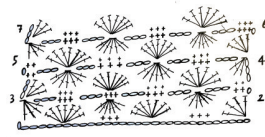
There were a number of discussion threads related to the ethics of confidentiality, as part of the challenge in this study was to work accepting that the anonymity usually accorded to participants could not be guaranteed in a digital setting. Participants accepted this risk as part of their existing practices of sharing material on social media platforms, accepting instead that “Nothing is truly private anywhere on the internet” (PG) and that even in a closed group, “If I don’t want something to be known publicly then I won’t post it” (RL). Nevertheless, it was felt to be a supportive and “safe place” (MI): TP commented that she was excited and simultaneously fearful that the group had a global reach and hundreds of members but was reassured that responsible administration of the group in terms of reporting, blocking and removing inappropriate content or users helped her to feel “mostly safe” (TP).

The affordances of the Facebook™ platform allowed members of the group to engage at their own convenience and pace and in a manner that felt comfortable for the individual – this is conveyed by PK, who reflected

For me it is a very convenient method of sharing as I can read responses and add my own whenever it suits me. ...I also like that, so far, your questions and comments have been open enough for me to choose, albeit quite carefully, how much or how little I write and share (PK)

In addition, nineteen participants identified that a closed group - separated from their personal timeline - allowed them to express ideas they felt uncomfortable sharing with family and friends in their physical sphere, eased by the “common bond” (JB) of making in knit and crochet which made geographical distance irrelevant. For RD, it was precisely the location of the research on Facebook™ that meant she felt able to engage: “Being a stay at home mom I don't get my opinion out there much, I'm not ‘heard’ much”(RD) but the group offered an opportunity to express her views, help others and receive help in return.

Four participants reflected explicitly on their participation in the research, with CR delighting with “look at us all!” as she wrote about how she gained positive rewards from interaction and collaboration. The sense of being part of a community was a

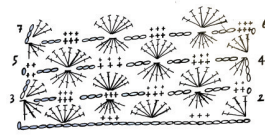


significant benefit for PG, who enjoyed seeing a range of comments daily from a diverse range of people:

A look at the membership here shows participation from all over the world so postings are by persons for whom English is a 1st, 2nd (or 3rd[...]) language [...] But we have all found a uniting factor, our love of the textile arts. Ladies, YOU ROCK! (PG)

SP appreciated the opportunity to thoughtfully analyse “why or how I like what I do with my knitting” and GS shared her gratification and “connection through not just the fiber arts we all have in common, but also the personal experiences and challenges we face everyday!”.



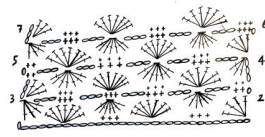


## A Woolly Wellbeing Story – BB

*My mental health is improved from crafting. My weekly knitting groups are the only places I can be myself, these people I knit with share my annoyance when family let me down, supported me through rough times and are a constant source of encouragement, but I also have become a more encouraging person through them.*

*I have a mental illness with symptoms including voice-hearing, paranoia, dissasotiation (can't spell it). Prior to knitting I was in hospital every couple of months with no hope of returning to work. Now I'm in my second year at uni, not been in hospital for a few years and earning my own money. I've found that by knitting or crocheting I can shut down or calm the voices in my head. Without that I wouldn't be able to sit through a lecture at uni. I even knit in church. Thankfully I'm studying knit at uni so no-one realises.*

*I wouldn't say knitting saved my life, but it played a huge part.*



## 4.2. WHAT WELLBEING MEANS FOR PARTICIPANTS

The very first regular ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Question’ (see Appendix 3) invited participants to share their own views of what wellbeing meant to them. Commonly, participants wrote about a sense of ease, peace or balance in managing the demands of life, such as here where one participant writes about a sense of ease within the body, mind and relationships which means that

Wellbeing occurs when one is at ease in their current situation and has no fear of the future. The 'ease' is broad in definition, it is in the mind and the body as well as in those we love. We have just enough to do and can manage our needs easily with manageable stress (AO)

This was specifically linked in the majority of comments to acts of creativity and knit or crochet in particular, where wellbeing and a feeling of peace was associated with compassion and meditative quiet (LG) or relaxation and a feeling of accomplishment in spending time with or in making crafted items for friends and family:

Crochet helps me through time for myself with friends ... Making things for friends and family and enjoying the giving and getting the personal benefit of achieving something x (CR)

Interestingly, the act of making for others was a frequent principle in generating feelings of wellbeing, although six participants acknowledged that this involved accepting a burden of care and tendency to place oneself as a lower priority. For example, RD wrote of her happiness in ensuring others were cared for: “even if I'm put on the back burner [...] I feel good making sure they feel good!” Similarly, AW3 wrote of the ways in which crochet influenced her wellbeing through a connection with family members, an ability to provide for others, an outlet for creativity and a sense of personal satisfaction. However, she identified the most significant influence as a break from the stresses of everyday life and a calming effect – her therapeutic “reality break” which helped to quieten her mind.

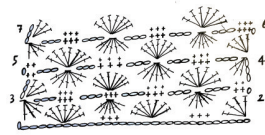


Fig. 6

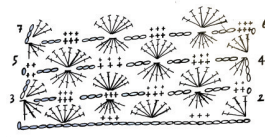


*This image is typical of photographs posted by participants which featured a 'maker's view'. These often literally balanced making in knit or crochet with sleeping or ill children and pets. They served to illustrate how time for hand craft was squeezed into and impacted by care-giving responsibilities and often were part of asking permission or affirmation in quietening the self when other demands were calling.*

Fig. 6: Image posted by SB

The link between making in yarn and perceptions of mental health wellbeing was the most prevalent shared in the research group. Participants often spoke about feelings of mental distress which were calmed by the act of making - as a "settling of the chaos" (JG3) or "being free from demons (intending anxiety, difficult thoughts, act)" (AM3). Evocatively, participant KC expressed how crafting in yarn not only provided her with soothing equilibrium in the face of significant mental and physical ill-health but also enabled her to feel that she has a place in the world:

a balancing of my thoughts and emotions, being able to stand out and say I am not just the little wife, or the sister who could sew, or the daughter who provided all the baby blankets so Mom could give them away, I have found that in the past few years it has become my way of saying Hey I still exist, I

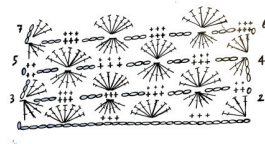


may be down, I am not providing because of my disabilities but that does not mean bury me, there is still a lot of beauty to me (KC)

For 15 members, participation in the research group itself held the potential to have an impact on subjective wellbeing. SP commented on the opportunity for reflection on an activity which was so important to her, to consider the choices or actions taken to craft and share something which she had made: “I like having the chance to analyze why or how I like what I do with my knitting. Very thoughtful group”. More frequently, others posted on the feelings of connection which participation brought them, especially in celebrating shared companionship through craft with other women:

the experience and contributions of the group is fascinating. From this I gain insight into others, again a sense of connection and inspiration. It is inspiring to see the work of other artists, hear/ read the stories behind them as well as how people learned to do these crafts (AM2)

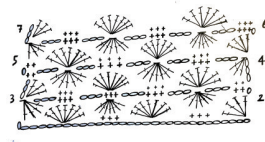
Similarly, a sense of connection through shared interest and common purpose is articulated by GS as she reflected on the way that yarn was weaving the group together through personal experience, craft and gratification in being part of a research project – “Truly a string of yarn that weaves us all together”. It is interesting to note that this participant perceived contribution to research as a form of creative making which supports her subjective sense of wellbeing.



## A Woolly Wellbeing Story - JH

*I would have to say that knitting and crochet have definitely had an impact on my wellbeing over the years. I was a military wife for many years then my husband worked on the oil rigs. I spent many a lonely time and knitting and crochet helped to pass the time. It was after I was diagnosed with a debilitating illness that this became even more true, I can no longer knit due to weakness in my arms and hands but I can crochet,, I don't know how I would cope without my hobby as it keeps me sane.*

*Discovering wonderful crochet groups has added to my joy as I love to communicate with like minded people none of my friends crochet although they love to see what I make. Planning a project gives me great joy and stops me from sliding back into a depression.*



### 4.3. SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Overwhelmingly, the most significant topic shared throughout the research project was that of connection. Primarily, this was experienced through the medium of sharing digitally, which created an opportunity to make contact with those who may be geographically distant but who shared a common interest in yarn craft. In addition, participants reflected in the group on the ways that making connected them to family members – whether still living or whose memory they wished to preserve.

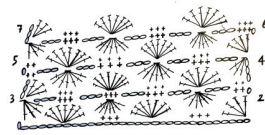
#### 4.3.1. Making and Sharing on Facebook™

194 participants made the connection between sharing within a Facebook™ group and sitting together as a physical craft group, where the screen or monitor created a digital space for connection. This was likened by HB to the conversational space opened when “everyone has their own work that they can turn their eyes/attention to when they feel like it, the conversation feels less intimidating” - an idea echoed by JH2 as she reflected that “deep talks are less intimidating with less eye contact”.

In general, Facebook™ knit and crochet groups were perceived as supportive in facilitating positive, social connections in personally dark times. JP shared how the challenges of recovering after a family member took their own life had been aided by using crochet to occupy her thoughts, ‘saving’ her and providing a positive achievement to post on Facebook™ and use to engage with others:

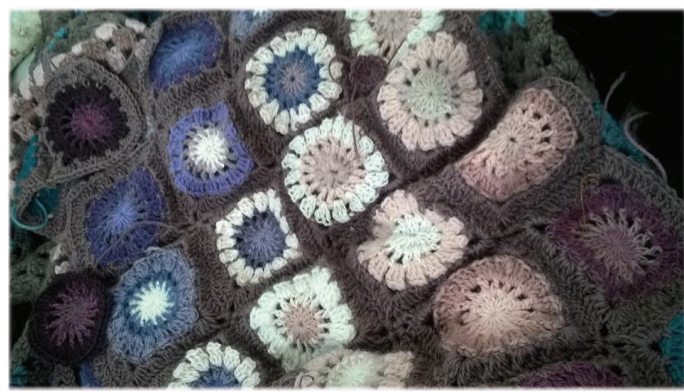
a fantastic community all very encouraging and positive, it helped me get through some very painful and lonely times (...) and the crochet was there again to keep my mind occupied rather than dwell on terrible thoughts. it's still helping me. i cant always finish what i make but switching to crochet mode has really saved me from insanity and i have something positive to put on facebook rather than being miserable all the time (JP)

Moreover, the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’ in particular was felt to be a safe space for making connections with others and sharing views on what making meant for personal wellbeing. In some cases, the research project was the first time participants



had contributed and commented rather than 'lurked' in a Facebook™ yarn craft group, such as SG, who did so as she “felt moved by what everyone in this group is sharing”.

Fig. 7



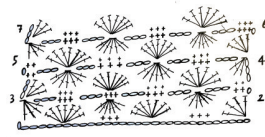
*This image is typical of making as a metaphor for connection within the group: Individual knit or crochet squares are made, then woven together to form a larger whole. It often represented a significant commitment of time and labour.*

Fig. 7: Image posted by AKK

62 members of the group highlighted that connection with others through Facebook™ knit and crochet groups was more than sharing creativity, but in providing simple access to other people. It was a common comment that revealed how socially or physically isolated many participants were, such as DB, who revealed that her circumstances were “very isolated geographically and emotionally”. For AM5, connecting with others in the physical world was too overwhelming, but her anxiety was soothed by sharing her making on Facebook™ in a time frame which she could control:

One thing I do need though is community and the FB group has given me that in a way I can manage (AM5)

For WL, involvement in Facebook™ craft groups provided a break from people she knew in the physical world, where connections were heavily shadowed by the fact that



she was undergoing cancer treatment: Rather than her personal Facebook™ timeline being dominated by her illness, she could simply be defined by “my desire to knit socks” in her closed group for knitters. Others expressed a need for balance, where making alone at home was celebrated, but sharing in a Facebook™ group provided opportunity for contact and sharing creativity:

There is definitely a sense of connection that I am getting even simply joining this group ... I gain insight into others, again a sense of connection and inspiration. It is inspiring to see the work of other artists, hear/ read the stories behind them as well as how people learned to do these crafts ... Yay for making alone, my focus is more focused and yay for the inspiration that comes in a group. (AM2)

#### 4.3.2. Connection Through Shared Interest

The inspiration that came with being connected through Facebook™ to other women who shared both the process of making and finished crafted objects was a dominant message in the group, with 35 related comments. In particular, this was about bonding over a shared creative interest – “the sharing of ideas and projects with like-minded people” (PK). Interestingly, 6 comments highlighted how sharing in digital space was important where

None of my friends crochet so have no interest in wool or stitches!! The crochet world I have joined is amazing and the support is just the best ... It has certainly helped me to keep busy and feel part of a community (AH2)

or

None of my friends or family knit or sew so although they admire and appreciate what I make they don't understand the work involved (LY)



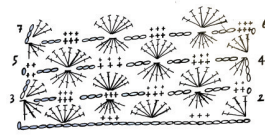


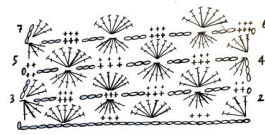
Fig. 8



*Many images of finished objects were posted with pride and then received praise and affirmation within the group. These are KW's socks, where she delighted in the satisfying colour and suitable fit, having adapted a pattern for her frame. Typically, the image focuses on an extremity and offers protection from facial identification.*

Fig. 8: Image posted by KW

For others, it was notably the opportunity to receive positive strokes of appreciation about their accomplishments as their online practices of sharing enables them to gain inspiration from others' achievements. ME wrote of "a sense of community online that I don't get in my neighbourhood", where she felt bonded to people she did not know because they 'liked' or commented on the making she shared. Likewise, JD posted about gaining pride and "a real sense of achievement" through positive comments from others in the Facebook™ group. MI gathered together threads about wellbeing in reflecting that connections with other members would inspire and teach her, developing a sense of accomplishment which was significant to her as someone who is "alone most of the time":



It is only through the groups that I belong to on Facebook that I gain some sense of "belonging".... One of the other advantages of belonging to these online groups is the sense of accomplishment. The other members spur me on to create nicer things than I would have done before, they teach and guide me, they seek my advice, and there is an overall sense of "well-being" when one is connected (MI)

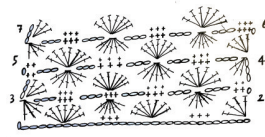
Participants used the digital context to safely share what they had made in knit and crochet, seeking belonging as well as appreciation. Illustrating this are the 682 comments which write about or include images of completed items or work in progress which ask – implicitly or explicitly - for approving comments to increase a sense of connection and appreciation of skill.

#### 4.3.3. Connections with Family Members

101 participants shared through the group how the act of stitching enabled them to feel closer to family members. For many, this did not include the physical practice of making together, where skills were explicitly passed down from an older generation, but in making alone and experiencing nostalgia through memories of the family (Mayne, 2016c) or in using inherited materials. JB recalled the creativity of her mother and grandmother, where the inheritance of their tools and yarns gave her a strong sense of connections as “the keeper of the family collection”. For WL, it was only after she started to knit and crochet that she recalled the textile making practices of her mother and grandmother. She used her new skills to feel emotionally connected to their memory during a period of serious illness:

I found myself remembering my Mom (who died over 25 years ago) teaching me to knit when I was little. I found myself wishing I had her knitting needles. I learned to crochet because I wanted - I NEEDED to feel more connected to my Mom and to my Grandmother after I was diagnosed (WL)

A “sense of nostalgia” and appreciation was shared by AM3 as she recalled being taught creative yarn craft by family members, whilst regretting that she did not



understand how significant those moments were. MF reflected how yarn craft helped her to ‘time-travel’ through using the repeated actions undertaken by three generations of women in her family, where the hand motions of crochet made a connection to memories of haptic pleasure:

As a side benefit I find the process makes me slow down, almost pause my hectic life which, in turn is a little like time travelling. I feel connected to past generations through the rhythm of the repeated actions, knowing that my Mum, Nanny, Great Nan must have used the same actions (...) Not wool related, but I get a similar feeling when making apple crumble - the rubbing motion used to make the flour and butter into bread crumbs takes me straight to my Nanny's kitchen (MF)

For some, posts revealed that knit and crochet was used to construct a current connection to the women who had originally taught them as children. AM6 wrote about the joy of “shop-bought clothes” after being dressed in hand-made items as a child, but that – as a prolific knitter in adulthood - her expertise was building a new relationship with her mother:

I was able to open her eyes to all the patterns and yarns that were now available so she's taken it up again and often comes to me for help with pattern instructions (AM6)

Similarly, KC wrote of the shared love of yarn craft between herself and her mother. In the care-giving role reversal that can come with ageing, “she turns to me for help as the more complicated patterns get the better of her [...] so the bond continues”. Being able to teach and support those who had introduced them to yarn craft was seen as a precious type of connection.

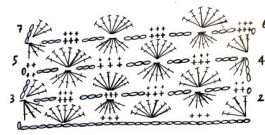
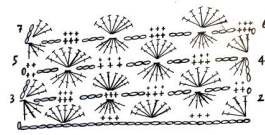


Fig. 9



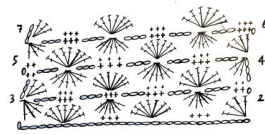
*JE posted this image of a completed blanket. She wrote of how, after illness, her mother-in-law taught her how to crochet in order to pass the time during recuperation. It stood as a testament to her recovery as well as an artefact symbolic of the relationship between the two women.*

Fig. 9: Image posted by JE



## A Woolly Wellbeing Story – DJ

*For me crochet has had a very positive effect on my mental well-being. I have suffered from depression and general anxiety disorder for years. 2 years ago my youngest daughter (4 at the time) was diagnosed with OCD. This was a very sad, stressful time for us as we learned to accept and handle this. As her problems got worse and we struggled with therapy and medicine my problems only got worse as I spent so much time and energy on hers I had nothing left for me. I was at a very low point in life and turning to food whenever I had some downtime so I had something "to do" or rubbing my knuckles to the point of hurting. My husband suggested knitting or crocheting to keep my hands busy. I watched the tutorials on XX's site and taught myself to crochet. I love it! It gives me something to do with my hands, relaxes me, gives me something to focus on, allows me to be creative and I just love the sense of accomplishment seeing a project coming along. No matter what is going on that is out of my control I can control the crochet. And even better, a few friends offered to pay me to make something for them and it's taken off. I've started a little side business selling items.*



## 4.4. AGENCY

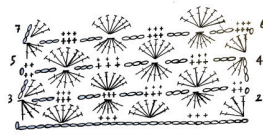
There are many ways in which participants identified how knit and crochet, hand crafted alone but shared to Facebook™ could enhance their sense of agency as a powerful factor in sustaining their perceptions of wellbeing. This took many forms, such as deliberately using making as a strategy for self care - whether perceived as time for quiet reflection, carving out time for the self, or as a deliberately therapeutic act. Participants in the research group shared ways that they took action to exercise mindfulness, to comfort themselves, to provide self-care in times of distress, and in some cases as a form of self-identified therapy to manage greater mental health challenges. Both the activity of knit and crochet and the agency of sharing personal narratives and coping strategies in the Facebook™ group was highlighted by members. Agency was also expressed in using hand craft as a way of caring for others, which for some participants was tied closely to enhancing wellbeing through feeling productive in using their time or in finding ways to contribute to their family and wider communities. Feeling ‘creative’ in a range of different ways, such as learning new skills and experimenting artistically with knit and crochet was also linked to perceptions of wellbeing and self-empowerment.

### 4.4.1. Being Agentic in Finding Ways to Comfort the Self

116 participants wrote about the ways that knit and crochet making enabled them to cope with the stresses of everyday life, with the endless possibilities of creating with yarn providing a distraction from other concerns (AH2). PK voiced her views on the soothing nature of yarn craft, echoing the thoughts of others in celebrating the “gentle rhythmic movement” of knitting. Here, full concentration on her making allowed her to feel challenged and engaged, whilst in more troubled times rows of simple stitching

was the only thing I did that was involved enough and non-threatening enough to keep me calm and relaxed. It brought my anxiety levels and heart rate down, and slowed my breathing. At my worst, just row after row of stocking stitch was all I could manage (PK)

but still could bring a sense of achievement.



For 37 members, time spent in knit and crochet was a rare opportunity to spend time on an activity for themselves alone, rather than focusing on actions demanded by the emotional labour of family life (even if the crafted object was then gifted to another – see section 4.4.2 below – Gifting and Giving). As a busy mother, SB valued time to make as her “pure indulgent me time” where she could “lose” herself in the process of making and forget other demands.

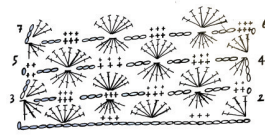
94 participants explicitly associated knit or crochet making with such acts of soothing mindfulness, enabling them to concentrate on “just 'being' in the moment, enjoying each stitch just focusing on now” (CJ). There are echoes of Csikszentmihalyi's (1992/2002) ‘flow’ here, where the self is forgotten and the moment of being in the process feels suspended. Many members of the group focused on this effect in knit and crochet, where repetitive stitching becomes calming and meditative for what the group came to call the “monkey mind” (AL2) of distractedly juggling the demands of the everyday:

It's the rhythm of my hands that does it for me ... by keeping your hands occupied, the monkey mind is busy focussing on what your hands are doing and that lets you relax. We're sociable beings, we like to chat but sometimes we get in our own way and doing something practical helps to stop that. (CP)

Not just the act of making, but the tactile experience of working by hand in yarn offered many participants a sense of calm in feeling mindful and grounded.

Rhythmic hand movements were declared as soothing (PG), especially where accompanied by the quiet, absorbed focus needed to follow a pattern (CP). The repetitive qualities of knit and crochet and focus on observing the making emerge could allow a temporary relief in forgetting the outside world existed (GC). This could be associated with meditative, repetitive action, such as where SG wrote that “the rhythm of knitting is what I use to calm me down after a rough day or just when I feel like being quiet”. This was echoed by AO in her comment about the comfort of “the reliable rhythm of the stitches and the feel of the lovely delicious soft yarn on ‘snag-full’” days. JB3 specifically focused on the sensory elements of handling yarn as a





welcome relief from her work practices which were focused on plastics, electronics or digital products and lacked a significant association with the tactile:

When I knit I am working with my hands and that's an antidote to the modern world of electronic media and stuff you can't touch (JB3)

For some, the feel of yarn itself brought comfort, with the simple, soothing nature of textile which brought an “overwhelming feeling of peace and accomplishment” (EB) through being creative. VB reflected that simply handling her work acted as a “comfort blanket” and that the act of holding yarn, as much as the act of stitching, helped to “still” her mind.

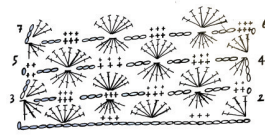
Fig. 10



*Mandalas, made in crochet more often than knit, were posted by members such as CR, who wrote about the mindfulness facilitated by the circular pattern. These crafted objects have links to symbolism in Hindi and Buddhist cultures about the circularity within the universe.*

Fig. 10: Image posted by CR





#### 4.4.1.1 *Deliberate acts of self care*

For seven participants, the repetitive, meditative action of stitching went beyond a relaxing comfort to a specific strategy to help manage physical pain through distraction. LG wrote extensively on how the act of crochet was both “meditation” and “medication” which “allows me to move my mind to peaceful, beautiful musings. No mobility issues, no pain there”. She explained how crochet enabled her to manage physical pain to a moderate level or control her responses to escalation of pain.

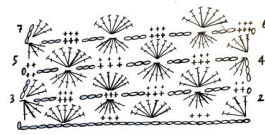
For 35 members, it was emotional pain and distress which could be managed through focusing on the motions of knit and crochet, which helped to direct thought away from the negative and provide a sense of agency and control. JB4 commented that crochet provided an instant sense of peace and helped to “block destructive thoughts”. DS responded by describing how significant low mood and distress led her to painful compulsive actions such as hand-rubbing, but that making had allowed her to manage such behaviours and provided a creative outlet and restore a sense of control, achievement and agency:

It gives me something to do with my hands, relaxes me, gives me something to focus on, allows me to be creative and I just love the sense of accomplishment seeing a project coming along. No matter what is going on that is out of my control I can control the crochet (DS)

For a few participants, the act of knitting or crochet was perceived as particularly therapeutic in allowing space for thinking, soothing or grieving. KM wrote of the ways that a pastime which had been familiar for over 50 years had taken on new significance following her cancer diagnosis and that her making would offer her companionship “over the next many weeks and months of treatments”. In a different fashion, two participants showed how making in crochet helped to soothe the pain of grief, soothing the pain of loss:

This WIP represents an escape, mindless rows now of repetition to ease the pain of a lost love. It will warm and cuddle a newborn but for every stitch it's the memory of my own babe, 38 years ago today. (GS)

And for SR, where hand craft provided space for grieving her father:



crochet gave me the head space to think and mourn. I cried a lot but it was therapeutic. Other activities like reading or internet would have stopped me from having that thinking time. (SR)

#### *4.4.1.2 Self-identified therapy*

For some, the vernacular understanding of crafting as therapeutic took on a much more concrete form, with 42 participants clearly constructing links between making in knit and crochet and the management of mental health issues. MB posted about the “simple pleasures and mindfulness craft brings me” without which she felt she would need to spend money on therapeutic counselling. More specifically, DW2 identified that it was the focus of designing and making in yarn which provided her with an emotional “high” and helped to push away the “severe bouts of depression” she experienced. This resonated with JP, who indicated that she was struggling with her mental health, but that concentrating on making helped to “keep the demons out”.

Four members shared images where crafted objects or purchased yarn were anchored by comments about making as “medication”, suggesting that they felt such activity had an impact akin to (or in place of) prescription drugs for diagnosed illnesses. Usually this was treated with humour, but not exclusively, with JM cheering that her sister had “refilled my meds” in buying her yarn and others speaking of yarn or making practices as “Self-medicating” (KB) or “the best sort of medication” (PK). More seriously, BG presented an image of her making, commenting that it served as her “medicine” as she had chosen to self-manage the swings of a bipolar disorder.

Moving, evocative stories were shared time and again in the group, with the message that knit or crochet had ‘saved’ members from being overwhelmed by mental ill-health. Examples included RL, who found that making with yarn meant that she had less “time to think the bad thoughts”. Crafting was no simple solution to all ills, but she felt it had played a considerable part:

Don't get me wrong, I still get the bad days, and it isn't just the craft that's helped, BUT it has played a big part in keeping me sane! (RL)

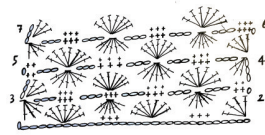


Fig. 11

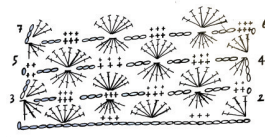


*Images taken from this position, curled up on a sofa or with feet up, were a common form of post in the group. The multiple layers of blankets were shown as part of self-care and choosing to or being forced into rest. For many, the comforting envelopment of blankets was used to signal the protection that knit or crochet provided when physically or mentally unwell.*

Fig. 11: Image posted by AM4

Likewise, BC2 shared how yarn craft had helped her to “hang on” and focus on positive achievements in making to help manage social anxiety, depression, obsessive-compulsive and eating disorders:

Knitting and crochet have truly saved me - My life was going downhill by the time I was 19. Crafting keeps my mind sane, it helps me in so many ways (BC2)



#### 4.4.2 Giving and Gifting

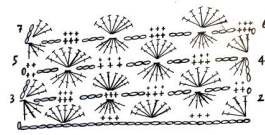
Agency in feeling productive and in caring for others was also identified by participants as they saw their knit and crochet making as an important form of giving – both in a material and temporal sense. This has resonance with participants’ comments as they shared their views on being socially engaged through activism in yarn-bombing – a form of street art which uses displays of knit and crochet to brighten mundane areas or celebrate specific events – or quieter social activism in making for charity. Participants also wrote about both the importance of and pressures involved in using their skills to make for family members and other gift recipients, whereas making for the self appeared less common. Moreover, there were interesting contrasts in members’ opinions of keeping rather than giving in the defence of purchasing or ‘stashing’ large quantities of yarn for future projects.

##### 4.4.2.1 Activism

51 participants were enthusiastic about the principle of using knit and crochet to brighten the environment or to make a statement, even where they personally did not engage with it. It was perceived as a way of celebrating “creativity, social engagement, civic responsibility” (PT) and as a beautiful “way for artists to express themselves or to make a point” (EB). The purposeful drawing attention to social issues using knit or crochet also extended to challenging social perceptions of the crafts themselves, especially in the intention “to subvert people's view of women who knit...” where “people look at me like I am a little woman” (RP).

8 participants wrote about yarn-bombing projects they had been involved with, from decorating street signs, homes, local shops, schools and larger scale installations such as at the ‘Yarndale’ wool festival (2018). They perceived the effects to be beneficial within a generous crafting community and for the wider public, to make people smile and lift their “soul” (MF) and contain the potential to alter an environment in a way which could have a significant positive impact on individuals:

I think it can lighten a mood, or brighten a day. Imagine if a yarn bombed bridge actually lightened someone's mood so much that they decided that not to end their life today (MR).



Involvement in yarn-bombing activities was generally through groups organised in physical communities or on social media, but some participants explained that they preferred a quieter involvement where they could contribute anonymously. This included GS, who reported “a great feeling of satisfaction and appreciation seeing my handiwork used to make the people smile” in donating to local installations but preferred that her contributions remained private.

Fig. 12



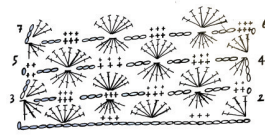
*RL posted several images of a local yarn-bombing collaboration in her vicinity. The highly decorated bollard and lamppost covers were designed to bring nature into an urban space. RL explained that she enjoyed the creativity in working with others for this public project and preferred the secret satisfaction of her anonymous contribution than being known.*

Fig. 12: Image posted by RL

#### 4.4.2.2 Making for charity

Such ‘quiet’ activism through charitable giving using knit and crochet was far more prevalent. 69 participants wrote about and shared images of hats for babies in neo-





natal units, lap blankets for hospices, ‘twiddlemuffs’ for those with dementia, breast prostheses for patients following mastectomies, socks for women’s refugees and full layettes to be given to parents whose children died at or shortly after birth. In contrast to yarn bombing, this was often motivated by personal circumstance and not necessarily shared with the wider public, engaging in “quiet social” (CR) activism and making for charity by “stealth” (SP).

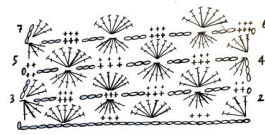
Fig. 13



*GS regularly posted images of the items she made for her local homeless shelter or sold at a goodwill store in order to donate money to homeless charities. Making such as this was part of a significant personal commitment to ‘giving back’ in her community.*

Fig. 13: Image posted by GS

68 members saw their making as a way of nurturing others who will “‘understand’ (the love, thought and time that's gone into it)” (CT) in the same way that they may cook a meal for loved ones. This was conveyed particularly through making baby clothes or blankets, for example with KR, who described how she would rock and sing to her completed items for giving, imbuing the object with love. GS wrote extensively on this topic, as she only crafts with yarn gifted to her by others and in return makes a gift for the recipient or to be donated to charity. She described how, retired after decades in the workforce, she is fulfilling her own need to make whilst simultaneously providing comfort to strangers. She explained that it was a way of sharing the “joy, comfort and therapy of my craft” and extending her affection for recipients through “keeping my



friends wrapped in love in every stitch”. Of these, 7 participants explained that they used knit and crochet for charity as a way of nurturing themselves, in order to “concentrate on someone else, and it gets me out of my own head” (KR), allowing personal concerns to move to the background for a brief time, or to make “me feel better and that I am still useful” (WP).

#### *4.4.2.3 Making for loved ones*

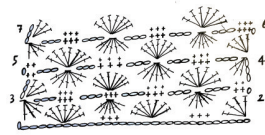
Participants were far more focused on making for others – family and friends – than for themselves. This was expressed by 42 participants as a form of welcome emotional labour, fulfilling a need “to make other people feel wanted and loved and that they matter” (MR) or to show altruism (CF2) through spending extended time in creating a knit or crochet item for someone:

Because all those hours creating for someone else is a true act of selflessness. What better way to show you care? (CF2)

19 members explicitly identified that what they made for others was symbolic of their care and became imbued with thoughtfulness and affection which could be transferred through the item to the recipient: “I like other people to feel like I love them and they matter to me” (DT). SP wrote of her feelings of connection to the recipient of her making “and find myself in prayer for them while knitting their item. So that increases my happiness”. Likewise, AL described how each garment for her grandchildren “has love in each stitch”, providing a “granny hug” each time it is worn.

The idea of knit and crochet items holding emotion and the potential for healing can also be observed in comments from those who acknowledged the ways that making for others enabled them to cope with separation and loss. For example, CR2 posted in an image of a detailed crochet shawl she made for her sister which helped both women deal with a bereavement:

Made this for my sister who has been going through the ringer lately. It brightened her day and hearing the smile in her voice warmed my heart and helped with my own healing. (CR2)



Similarly, JN wrote of the child she handed over for adoption 45 years ago and how each baby she now knits clothing for enables her to think of him.

Fig. 14



*This is a typical image of blankets or garments for young babies shared in the group. Laid out, such as here, or modelled on dolls, the making was occasionally for donation, but more frequently for children, grandchildren or other new members of the extended family.*

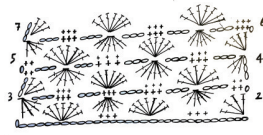
Fig. 14: Image posted by MM6

#### 4.4.3.4 Making for the self

In contrast, making for the self was an infrequent focus amongst participants. On only 4 occasions, members encouraged each other to consider this, as in the example where JM3 encouraged MF to complete a blanket for herself, as “we get so bogged down in making for others”. However, it was far more likely that participants acknowledged the *time* spent in knit or crochet was the element which allowed them to nurture themselves, rather than the completed object, often as an escape from domestic demands:

How this impacts on my well-being? I am compelled to make stuff, & it's 'me time' when I'm doing it, otherwise it's just a round of cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry day in day out. (JB)





7 participants were more engaged in writing about the need to defend their right to spend time for themselves in being creative. It was this aspect which provided pleasure and enjoyment, often in the face of prejudiced views on knit and crochet as an activity limited by age and gender “because people think that only ‘grannies’ knit” (CP). Similarly, LB wrote of her hard-won fight to spend time as a yarn crafter and find joy in her creativity:

If we are creative beings, why should [we] be ashamed? I think as women, that we are taught that being mothers, homemakers, artists, crafters ... is somehow not as good or not important enough to be respected. I have had to fight this my entire life. I have overcome this, for the most part. But it has taken a lifetime to gain this strength. I just hope that we can help each other be strong, be proud, and keep collecting what we need to do our craft and find JOY from it. We all need JOY in our lives, and it is different for each of us. (LB)

There was also a nuanced view on such ideas regarding women’s right to creative activity and the pressure to be ‘useful’ in making things for others. LG wrote challengingly on this topic, querying whether members were too invested in building self-worth through making, caught in a trap where women were not permitted to be idle, but should be observed offering labour for others. She questioned why females were constantly required to be ‘useful’ and make a social contribution through charitable making:

I have a concern that the adage "do something!" drilled into female children is not the be.g.inning. Are "we" taught it is best to do something (useful) as opposed to nothing. When "we" knit/crochet/craft in the name of charity is that "something"? O/wise would/do we feel we make no contribution (...) It is difficult to feel "worthy" when society seems to value financial worth. I was the artsy type, and academics. career, purpose, etc. escaped me as solid concepts to follow. I was told over and over "fine something to do" "... do something". (LG)

This idea of the rights and pleasures of creative activity are picked up in more detail in the following section.

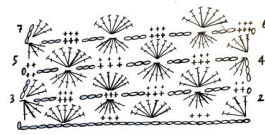


Fig. 15



*KC posted numerous images of extravagant and delicate shawls she designed and made for herself. The modelling of these, caught in motion, captures the pride and joy in being creative.*

Fig. 15: Image posted by KC

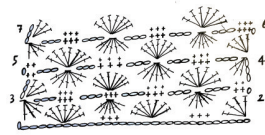
#### 4.4.3. Learning and Creativity

Agency was also demonstrated in taking deliberate steps to enhance skills and learn anew from one another, demonstrated in the explicit seeking and providing of advice, a joy in learning new skills and a focus on using time productively rather than passively. Frequently, taking time to experiment with new skills and celebrate them through sharing on Facebook™ was part of a determination to enhance wellbeing through being creative.

A repeated request for help was related to the use of jargon, slang terms and yarn related acronyms which had the potential for some participants to feel excluded. For example, JB queried “CALs? KALs? WIPs? Frogs? Subbed? There's a language here that I'm struggling to understand”. It may be useful to remind the reader here that there is a glossary on p.xi and in Appendix 1 to avoid similar frustrations.

##### 4.4.3.1 Seeking and giving advice

Participants frequently exchanged practical tips within the study group, from opinions on needle and hook choice, commenting on specific techniques and troubleshooting



difficulties, finding and solving problems with patterns and providing advice on washing and care of crafted objects. 56 posts explicitly sought advice, although comments on other threads often offered help as conversations developed. An example is the seemingly obscure query from KW3 whether any members had “a pattern for a sombrero to fit crocheted monkey?” This post in fact generated nearly 30 responses with clarifications and suggestions about potential sizing and database resources which may help.

A common focus for seeking advice was pain management when crafting, with recommendations sought for tools or home remedies for soothing pain (see also section 3.2). AR was one of 17 participants who sought advice on hand positions or specific hooks / needles to help manage pain she experienced as a result of yarn craft:

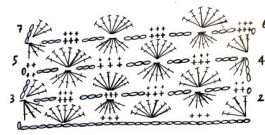
It's making me so sad and I can't cheer myself up by sitting down and creating something woolly as I usually do! (AR)

Fig. 16



*CW posted this image of the component parts of a child's jacket, asking advice about blocking (washing and pinning to size after making). As well as answers to help, she received many comments praising her precision and neatness in making.*

Fig. 16: Image posted by CW



In all, 197 comments were specifically designed to offer support in responding to requests for help. These ranged from practical suggestions for hand care to very specific advice focused on another's project, olive oil and sugar rub for sore fingers, tips on improving tension and techniques to make a complex stitch pattern appear more professional. Such comments usually offered very positive messages, reinforcing decisions the maker had made, reassuring that faults were barely visible or could be artfully concealed and encouraging fellow members to push forward in learning about their craft. MI encouraged questions, as "that is how we learn!" and JB4 celebrated that "the best things come from the learning curve [...] There's no such thing as a fail. Its just a wip". The tone within the group is reflected in an example of encouragement from GS – that participants should "keep at it girl!".

#### *4.4.3.2 Praising others*

The most prevalent example of taking notice and observing beauty in the world was reserved for positive, encouraging and admiring comments to other participants about the work they shared in the group. These were short, often single word or short phrase comments such as "wonderful", "good job", "lovely", "awesome" and "cute". Whilst brief, 1443 comments of this nature were made during February 2015 – August 2016, thus representing over 21% of communications participants had with each other. An indication of the most frequently shared responses praising the work of others can be observed in the image below:





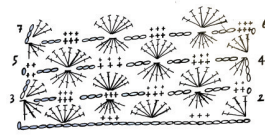


Fig. 18



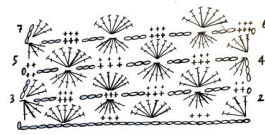
*KM posted this picture of her completed 'Sophie's Garden' blanket, part of a larger designer 'Crochet-Along' in a different Facebook™ group and blog. The group activity, undertaken alone but shared in digital groups, is designed to help makers learn and experiment with different stitches. Pride in posting, as well as praise from comments, reflected the learning journey.*

Fig. 18: Image posted by KM

17 participants wrote specifically about what they had learned through joining online knit-along (KAL) or crochet-along (CAL) events through social media, which gave them the opportunity to connect with and learn from other makers as well as the designer of the pattern. Digitally working 'alongside' others enabled CP4 to access useful support and advice as well as inspiration from seeing others' projects. HB2 wrote of her joy in learning new skills even as an experienced knitter, celebrating "the wonders of the internet" in facilitating new projects with participants all over the world. Likewise, IM enjoyed sharing the "pleasure of stitching something beautiful at the same time [...] It feels like we're all doing it together".

#### 4.4.3.4 Using time productively

Whether management of pain, soothing relaxation and mindfulness or a therapeutic benefit to those with mental health difficulties, hundreds of comments in the group



identified knit and crochet as something which gave them agency in using time ‘well’, whether that was seen as being caring and protective or productive in offering a finished crafted object which demonstrated their worth.

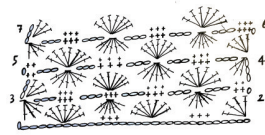
For 83 participants, a sense of feeling productive was key in motivating them to knit or crochet. Occasionally this was specifically highlighted as a contrast to using electronic media, where “knitting results in something tangible for your time” compared to the loss of time using an “iDevice” (DB). CB3 also wrote that she preferred crochet to ‘a mindless game’ and that it was “great to feel productive”. PG’s shared an image of her crochet bag, which she shared as part of this thread, proud that she was creating something useful “while most of the country seemed to spend last Sunday glued to the boob tube watching big men in tight pants run into each other”.

Using time productively through exercising skill rather than being passive was a common thread in comments. This seemed to be especially useful during time which would otherwise be ‘lost’ through waiting and travelling, as participants were concerned to “have something to show for your time” (TB). AM6 wrote how she would proudly knit on long train commutes, ignoring the stares of other passengers and feeling “smug” that she was using her time well. Likewise, AN explained how she would crochet on the subway and in breaks at work both to relax and feel she was being productive. Participants wrote about spending time in knit or crochet in libraries, churches, parks, in hospitals and surgeries, swimming lessons and cricket matches, usually because “My hands just feel lost if they don't have at least the choice of creating” (PK). The connection between making and engaging with the world around us was crystallised through DB’s comment, where she explained that she crafted “anywhere I'm waiting with nothing to do”, carrying “two different projects in my purse” to enable her to engage in the world around her:

I'm listening, learning, paying attention, I just need to have my hands busy.

The brain learns better when part of it is engaged in some way (DB)

For some, the idea of pushing oneself to learn and make in order to feel time spent was worthwhile gathered even greater significance. JD2 wrote of the ways that yarn craft enables her to feel purposeful and that she has a place in her community in



“doing something worthwhile” and giving gifts to friends or charities. Living alone and relying on social security for income, she felt that

these crafting hobbies are a great thing for people like me especially to have to do, gives us a 'place' in the world! (JD2)

Such purposefulness also appears to have a part to play in a few members managing distress in their lives, such as bereavement or physical ill health. JM posted an image of a completed blanket, produced during her father’s final illness and completed after his passing as “he'd have expected me to finish it with pride”. The messages of this section can be summarised by SS3, who stated that

I've lost so much in my illness. Knitting proves the I CAN do something.  
Something useful and beautiful (SS3)

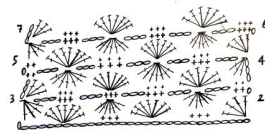
#### 4.4.4 Creativity

Joy in exercising creativity and recognizing creativity in others is manifested in the study through participants’ responses to colour, texture or the tactile softness of textiles, and perceiving knit and crochet as an artistic outlet. Frequently, participants engaged with identifying and celebrating beauty in the everyday for others, rather than themselves, as they commented on and praised participants’ images of making posted in the group.

##### 4.4.4.1 *Beauty in colour*

Participants commented that part of their mindfulness in making was connected to wanting to create something beautiful, something generous and warm for others and to satisfy visual or tactile appeal. DB celebrated that “creating something uses a different part of your brain” and whether “sticks and string” ( a popular term for yarn and needles or hooks), thread, fabric or paint, the desire to create “beautiful things” was deeply entrenched human behaviour. WL similarly spoke of a need for people to be creative with colour or pattern in order to express their stories:





Sometimes the story is simply, ‘Look at this beautiful color, and look at the shape I’ve made with it [...] I love you and I want to wrap you in rainbow colors and warmth’ (WL)

For 11 members, it was particularly colour which contributed to a sense of beauty and appeared to support participant engagement with enjoyment in making. TD wrote of satisfying her sensory interests through colour and embellishments, whereas SG realised that she tended to use self-stripping yarns, working “just one more row” to see new colours emerge. DS commented on the anxiety, even anger she experienced in being “creative with the colour” of a new project, unpicking work and reorganising until she was calmed by the “right combination” of satisfying colour.

In addition, three participants wrote about the role that synaesthesia - where sensations are triggered across the senses - played in their appreciation of colour and the delight it brought them. AO spoke of being enlivened by the smell of “bright, juicy greens”, whereas for AL2, the powerful lily of the valley fragrance she received with purple was too harsh and overwhelming. Similarly, MF wrote of ‘hearing’ colours, including green, bright red and pink, which “lifts my soul and some days makes it sing!”.

Likewise, GS wrote about sharing her free patterns, adding documents which explained creative changes and modifications she had made as a way of “paying it forward” to her fellow knit and crochet makers. Sharing free patterns or links to published designs was perceived by LM2 as a way of communicating with friends in the digital community:

I feel like I have a friendship with these people and as such would want them to have access to anything that can bring them joy, either from the wearing or the learning (LM2)

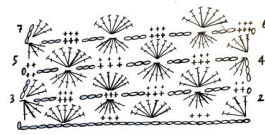


Fig. 19



*Images such as this were shared as part of the knit or crochet process, as participants delighted in the joy of pleasing colours as they changed in making. Comments often focused on the different effects created by working with the yarn, compared to the colour changes indicated in the ball or skein.*

Fig. 19: Image posted by LJ

#### 4.4.4.3 Creativity and ‘painting with yarn’

Within the group, there was often a spirited defence of a maker’s right to have a creative outlet. For some, this was in the face of ridicule that knit or crochet was “for old women” (JP) or that creativity in textiles had no economic value, such as JD2, who was told by her parents that “my artsyness and craftiness wasn’t worthy of anything”. In contrast, other participants commented on the support they had experienced or focused on reinforcing encouragement of creativity in fellow makers. CC2 shared how her husband referred to her as an artist, her knitting as art. In response to a member who felt that her making was under-appreciated, KR provided an encouraging rally cry: “Never let anyone crush your creativity [...] Stitch on my friend” (KR).

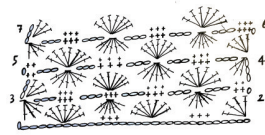


Fig. 20

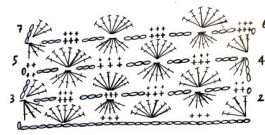


*JB was justifiably proud of her skill in knitting life-size, accurate representations of cakes. These ‘doughnuts’ gathered ‘likes’ and comments in praise of her creativity from other members.*

Fig. 20: Image posted by JB

Participants occasionally placed their making in the context of a broad skill they felt was directly connected to womanhood, where women were perceived as “more creative with softer materials” (RD) or that

Although it is often laughed at I think that women have an inbuilt NEED to create things. Whether that is food, clothes, handicrafts, homes, children or gardens. (...) This should be saluted rather than suppressed ... I also believe that women have for ever grouped together to create, whether to cook or sew or look after their children. This grouping together empowers them and feeds their creativity because they encourage each other. Long may this continue. (SH)



#### 4.4.4.4 The joy of stash

Connected to ideas on women's right to spend time and money on creativity, as part of carving out space for themselves and many participants celebrated the ways that *keeping* yarn for knit and crochet had a positive impact on them. 53 participants gave a spirited defence of their right to have a 'stash' – a collection of unused yarn which had not been purchased for a specific purpose, but for its tactile appeal or beauty. Participants were concerned that this should not be seen as selfish, but as an inspiring treasure where creative ideas had the potential to develop.

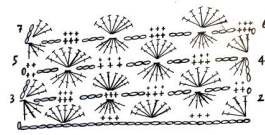
For MR it was a "buffer" or safety net, knowing that there was always new yarn available to her in the event of a "zombie apocalypse" or "a world wide shortage of sheep". PK embraced the notion of 'stash', regardless of its connotations of excess or secretiveness:

I love the word stash - it makes me think that there is plenty of choice and it is waiting for me to use it. I know I love what I have as I have chosen it.  
(PK)

In contrast, SN disliked the term and felt the careful string of the materials which supported her creativity and wellbeing deserved to be seen as treasure:

it sounds like a selfish or hoarding term, and I think knitters, crocheters, crafters are very willing to share with people who also value the raw materials of our trade. It isn't that we are hoarding, we are collecting something we love. I would much rather refer to it as my yarn treasure, or some other term that has less negative judgment attached. (SN)

Often, the justification of 'stash' was a justification for space in the home, providing an opportunity for participants to claim their right to have creative opportunities alongside domestic and familial demands. There was discussion between 23 members of those who spiritedly defended the need to have space for leisure equal to that of their partners, without the need to hide the materials which inspired them. AO felt that



we women need a space for ourselves, be it for our Yoga, our knitting reading , beading or what ever we like to do. Men have their 'man caves,' we need our space too (AO).

As part of AW3's assertion of her right to possess space in the home for her creative leisure, she couched this as equal respect for individual needs within the family.

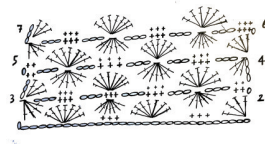
I have never felt the need to hide or smuggle my yarn in to the house. My husband knows where all my yarn is as does my sons ... They know that this is Mom's "thing" and respect it. (AW3)

Fig. 21



*This image is typical of image posts which celebrate 'stash'. Sometimes they were collections of precious yarn, gathered over time and saved for special projects and occasionally the images were of 'hauls' from specialist yarn fairs. Either form represented significant financial investment.*

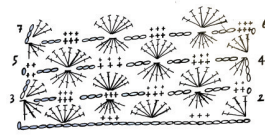
Fig. 21: Image posted by CB2



## A Woolly Wellbeing Story - PK

*I first took up knitting and crocheting again (having learnt as a child and knitted my own sweaters at University) after having had my children and having struggled with anxiety and post-natal syndrome. I liked the gentle rhythmic movement which was soothing. I also like the way it made me feel that I was achieving something positive, in the items I made. When at my best, I enjoyed the challenge and the way that following a pattern was tricky enough to make me concentrate solely on that, and forget about my other worries. Sometimes, it was the only thing I did that was involved enough and non-threatening enough to keep me calm and relaxed. It brought my anxiety levels and heart rate down, and slowed my breathing. At my worst, just row after row of stocking stitch was all I could manage, but using a self-variegating yarn I could make useful scarves/blanket squares and still feel happy with my achievements. I still knit and crochet for pleasure and relaxation. :)*





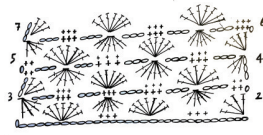
## 4.5 “FIBER CANNOT FIX EVERYTHING”: THE ‘DARK SIDE’ OF KNIT AND CROCHET FOR WELLBEING

The most intriguing finding of this study was that there could be a ‘dark side’ to the impact of knit or crochet and sharing making on Facebook™ on subjective perceptions of wellbeing: Over the course of the study, numerous participants identified ways that engaging in hand craft could challenge or disrupt their physical and mental health wellbeing with troubling experiences of pain and emotional distress resulting from loneliness, frustration and anxieties. For some participants, these were occasional instances which did not detract from a stronger perception of knit and crochet as a beneficial activity. However, for a small but significant minority of group members, the negative implications of engaging in hand craft caused intense distress and they were beginning to recognise it as damaging to their physical or emotional wellbeing. The words of one participant eloquently present a challenge to assumptions that hand crafting in knit or crochet would help makers manage their perceptions of subjective wellbeing: DB reminded the group that “Handwork helps. But it is not a panacea” and shared how yarn craft could lead her into “a very bad cycle of negative self-talking” which only speaking to others could help alleviate.

### 4.5.1 Physical Pain

It is clear in the findings of this study that - for some - making in knit and crochet caused, rather than alleviated pain. Several participants explained how the positive impacts as discussed above held greater weight, and that, on balance, experiencing some physical pain was perceived to be worth the benefits experienced: JM resignedly posted that she was “already in so much pain it's the only thing that distracts from it even if it causes a little more”. It was specifically the “sense of achievement and distraction from TV makes the occasional physical pain” of arthritis exacerbated by knitting make it nevertheless seem worthwhile for KS. Similarly, SP agreed that her pain was not eliminated, but rather made manageable through distraction. Making and thinking of the recipient of her yarn craft and the “high” that came with completing an item helped her to distract “my mind off of myself” (SP). Some shared adaptations they had made, managing or limiting their what or how they crafted: DB





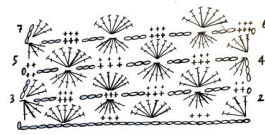
and JG both commented about the ways their bodies - in particular upper limb joints – dictated what and how much they could craft each day. However, they discussed working through pain “just to keep myself sane” (JG).

However, six others used the group to express their frustrations that the pain experienced through knit and crochet meant that making in yarn no longer held sufficient wellbeing benefits. Some ridiculed the concept of crafting for pain management, for example KB treated the idea with humour but continued to crochet, even if it made her “feel like I benchpressed a house [...] if i could find a way to use it for pain management I would be one happy hooker!!”. In contrast GD and AR shared how they were having to come to terms with giving up on yarn craft altogether, because of the physical pain they experienced. GD explained that she had “longed for retirement so that I could knit and sew all day”. Following a stroke, knit and crochet had helped to improve hand motor function, but making was a slow, painful process offering little reward: “I try to work through it but only make errors, so not worth persevering”. Likewise, AR described herself as being in “floods of tears” as she shared that spinal surgery and Dupuytren's Disease meant that crochet had become too painful and difficult to continue.

The group also became a forum for exchanging advice on managing the pain exacerbated or created by making with yarn. Participants offered each other techniques for hand and upper body stretching or explanations of yoga movements, signalling a widely accepted link between their making and pain. They shared tips on ice dips, pain relief gels and homeopathic lotions, compression gloves and different hook and needle manufacturers or materials, encouraging each other to try different strategies, as “you have nothing to lose except the pain” (AD).

50 comments were acknowledgements of others’ pain - either making a connection through expressing similar difficulties, such as in “My prayers are with you, I to suffer with pain” (FS) or a simple recognition of the impact it may have:

Sorry you're in pain, hope the meds kick in soon, pain is such a mood  
hoover (DJ)



Having the space to discuss this potentially negative effect in the Facebook™ group was appreciated, as members felt supported and not judged:

Your beautiful words touch me so much and giving the affirmation that pain is pain, suffering is suffering (IM)

Fig. 22



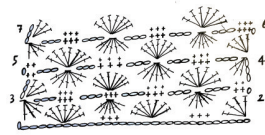
*NG shared this image - the only one of its kind in the project, as she wanted to show the physical pain that making often caused her. Her distress in not making in order to heal was considerable.*

Fig. 22: Image posted by NG

#### 4.5.2 Emotional Pain

For some participants, their struggle was with psychological distress, rather than physical pain. They shared that engaging in knit and crochet could have an opposite effect to that anticipated, where their focus was directed inward and could lead to cycles of negative thinking, exacerbating low mood or loneliness and anxieties. There are also darker connotations indicated here, where participants trying to develop their skills in making occasionally exacerbated anxiety and critical self-doubt.

Discussion about the inability for making in yarn to support recovery for those experiencing physical or emotional pain was intensified when, in the summer of 2015,



a well-known crochet designer took her life. She was not actively involved in the research but was known to many participants as well as the researcher and had sent messages of support about the benefits sharing on social media could have for yarn crafters. It led to 37 comments expressing grief as participants tried to express their sorrow. Some, such as JB3, recognised the pain of emotional distress, whilst SH reminded the group that

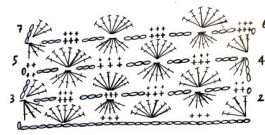
We all need to be mindful that underneath a smile or happy words there maybe a heart who's breaking (SH)

As a result, a number of posts were created to allow space for expressing such feelings, along with reminders about self-care and accessing help from mental health organisations in countries where participants were based.

#### *4.5.2.1 Distress*

In contrast to the alleviation of emotional pain which many members shared as presented above, three women specifically commented against the direction of the dominant narrative of knit and crochet as entirely beneficial. They explained that their experience was an aggravation of mental health concerns where knit or crochet did not support recovery – something which came as a surprise and disappointment to them. WL lamented that common advice to use crochet to support her recovery from cancer was thwarted as she felt “no energy and no ability to focus”. AN3 also became distressed that the calming impact of knit and crochet which previously enabled her to “relax and switch off from life's mundane irritations” was insufficient to help her manage a more significant “life changing experience”: She was concerned that her usual self-management strategies of calming making were no longer available to her.

For one participant, the very features often accredited as positive, such as the comfort of soft yarn or feeling lifted by colour, actively intensified mental health concerns. DB wrote extensively about her inability to crochet anything when struggling through the “constant, consistent fog” of depression and that colour – in particular bright, striping yarn – could aggravate her obsessive-compulsive disorders and made her feel “a little crazy”.



Similarly, for three members, this extended emotional responses to the tactile, feeling that negative thinking became imbued into the crafted object itself. The concern that “negative feelings go into the item I'm working on” prevented MR from making when she felt depressed. In a similar vein, MF shared a story of conflict with a friend she was making a blanket for and felt she could not finish it “in my negative mood and I couldn't contemplate giving a blanket made in anger”.

In contrast to feeling purposeful, 38 members of the group shared how frustrated their work in knit and crochet could make them feel. For a few, this came from external sources, such as KC2 who shared her distress at not being selected for a competition with a shawl she had spent so long designing and making: “Still not worthy ... acceptance is a big part of why I post and talk on the groups”. Others shifted the focus of frustration back to the work itself, feeling the need to step away from their making in order to recover from the effect of making mistakes. BB wrote about calling herself names, feeling frustrated by mistakes which meant she would have to unpick and rework a large section of knitting. As a result, she needed to step away from yarn craft to allow herself time to regain her equilibrium.

One participant wrote extensively about her anxiety and the ways that specific yarn projects could exacerbate this. AN shared her strategies of making smaller items only and limiting the amount of time spent, in order to avoid the build-up of stressful feelings in managing larger projects. Even so, she still experienced strong feelings of “anxiety and frustration”.

Likewise, MR felt that knit and crochet rather facilitated a looking inward which could lead to cycles of negative self-talk. She shared that “making something simple allows my mind to dwell on negative thoughts still”. Writing about her difficulty in using knitting for the meditative mindfulness discussed by others in the group, GD2 explained that she could only relax whilst knitting for a very specific aim, otherwise she spent more time “worrying about the next thing that I need to do”.

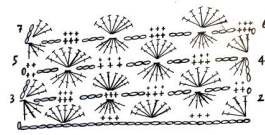


Fig. 23



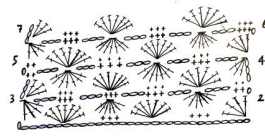
*MF drew other participants into her confidence, sharing an image taken in the evening and in nightwear. She sought advice from others about what to do with her blanket “made in anger”, as she felt the object would be affected by her negative feelings.*

Fig. 23: Image posted by MF

#### 4.5.2.2 Loneliness

Some participants reflected on the ways that crafting in knit and crochet itself, in addition to engaging in sharing through Facebook™, could exacerbate their feelings of loneliness and disconnection with family or friends. In contrast to the dominance of voices celebrating the sense of connection that both making in yarn and sharing on Facebook™ held, there were several participants who clarified that they did not experience such connection but felt isolated.

A focus on three participants illustrates how making in yarn exacerbated these feelings of isolation or disconnection and had a negative impact on their feelings of wellbeing: BC2 commented that she enjoyed the peace that knitting alone provided as it helped her to manage her anxiety, but that she felt lonely at times. Likewise, KW3 wrote of her loneliness in working on a project – a feeling increased by her employment



patterns which meant that she was making during the night when her family were asleep. These responses were summarised concisely by GC, who reflected that both crochet and seeing others' engagement about making shared on Facebook™ could "help to push loneliness away but conversely it can also bring the loneliness into focus".

A specific aspect of loneliness heightened through hand craft for some participants was not related to peer makers, but the family: In contrast to the larger numbers of participants sharing how making in yarn and crochet wrought links with family over the generations, five members of the group shared stories which highlighted family disconnection or an absence of connection. SP wrote of the "contentious" relationship she had with her family, but that hand-work in textiles was nevertheless "in the blood". This enabled her to feel connected with those generations beyond her immediate family and pondered whether the 'muscle memory' of skill in craft could be passed through DNA. Two participants considered ways that sharing in knit and crochet was helping them to create stronger bonds with younger generations, deliberately and actively creating new traditions in their own families. JB4 posted about how the expertise she knew earlier generations had possessed had not been passed down to her, but that she was consciously bonding with her own daughter through learning to crochet together. ME responded by sharing that no-one in her family "immediate or extended, is crafty or creative" so she was making plans to pass on her own skills in order to provide an activity that would "help reduce anxiety, express themselves, and share with each other and me to strengthen our family" (ME).



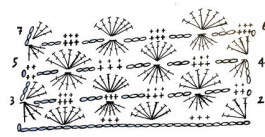
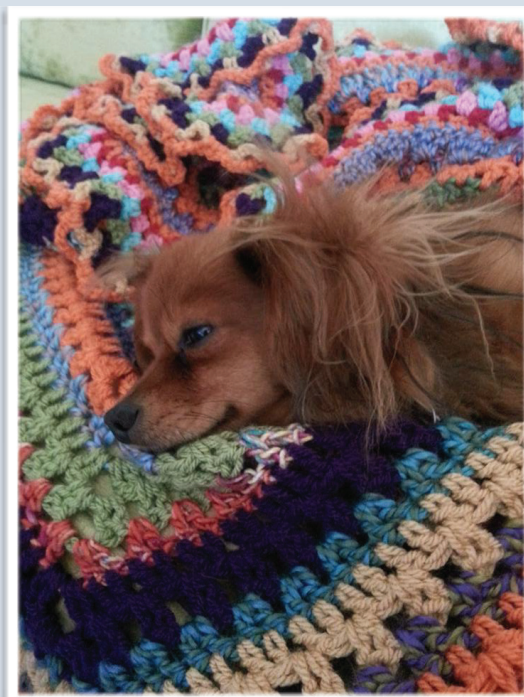


Fig. 24



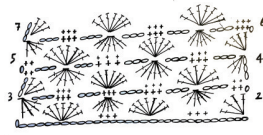
*JM was one of a number of participants who shared images of making alongside their 'fur-babies'. Feeling isolated geographically or lacking in peer support, images such as this were used to each out to try and make connections with other members of the group when feeling lonely.*

Fig. 24: Image posted by JM

#### 4.5.2.3 Self-doubt and self-criticism

24 participants posted about misplacing their skill in making using knit or crochet, unable to motivate themselves to a new project or to complete half-finished items – more than a lack of inspiration, this often led to a sense of loss and self-doubt in their abilities. Some, like DS, sought companionship from others who had lost their “mojo” or interest in making. JG3 also described her “limbo” stage when feeling “at a loss as to what to start”. MR similarly explained her sense of paralysis in being unable to craft in yarn, where “I can't motivate myself to look at, let alone finish” a number of partially complete projects.





Some participants shared their concerns in being unable to manage the pace of group crafting activities, such as online ‘knit-along’ or ‘crochet-along’ projects where portions of a patterns are released over a number of weeks. BM wrote of her tendency to choose such projects as a way of generating a sense of achievement, but worried about her difficulties in committing to a regular timetable and felt “that I have let myself down by getting behind”. A similar anxiety in falling behind on a project can be observed in RB’s comment that

I find my mind is always miles ahead of my body [...] but as my body has a mind of its own due to my spinal problems I'm not able to keep up [...] now that frustrates me (RB)

Occasionally, frustration at difficulties in interpreting or realising a design were dealt with using humour, such as this satirical comment from MR where addressed her current work in progress directly before giving the pattern its marching orders:

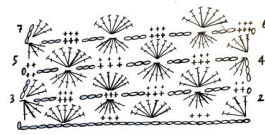
Maybe it's me and not you at all, but I feel that we may soon have to agree to go our separate ways ... we just don't seem to work together, we no longer agree about anything and it is becoming a constant battle to get on with you (MR)

However, such anxieties were not always handled so lightly. One participant evocatively wrote of her awareness of memory loss through ageing and laments her lost competence – LG reflected on decades of making and how she could pick up and recall crochet skills, but that now such memory eluded her as “my brain’s file cabinet opened in the night and information slipped out”.

#### *4.5.2.4 The pain of stash*

An aspect of self-criticism was observed particularly around comments related to keeping or ‘stashing’ yarn, where participants often felt guilty and occasionally seriously distressed about the amount of yarn they had purchased and stored without making the raw materials into completed crafted objects.

Often, this was also couched using the language of substance abuse: Members of the group described themselves as “addicts” who needed to “score” a “fix” from the



“dealer” at their local yarn shop. Whilst this was usually offered with levity, it also could greater seriousness, for example WL, who wrote about how she began knitting as a way to stop smoking and now experienced the same feelings of withdrawal if she was not making with yarn at least once a day. Despite the humour with which this topic was often considered, concerns about stashed yarn could not be treated with levity by all participants.

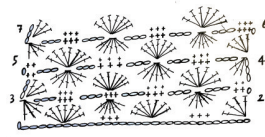
45 participants expressed seriously uncomfortable feelings about the amount of yarn they kept, the space it required, or the money spent on their making. Some, like KW3, felt guilty about purchases or, as CF and CP3, struggled with others’ opinions on yarn stored in the home:

I am a yarnaholic and have my stash everywhere in the house! (...) endured many comments from family members saying enough is enough! (CF)

For some, this extended to feeling guilty about buying and accumulating yarn, with participants occasionally sharing the embarrassment of being ‘discovered’, such as AF’s comment about how she blushed and stuttered so much that her husband thought she may have been watching pornography rather than purchasing yarn:

Yesterday I was about to pay for a yarn order on the internet when my husband came home very early, he must have thought I was watching porn or getting drugs...I blushed and stuttered! I have it sent to my work and keep it in the boot of my car till my day off! Then I squirrel it away, I don't know why in all other things I am really open, it is definitely a guilty pleasure (AF)

Comments on this topic were used by some group members as a rich source of advice in strategies for hiding yarn purchases, such as claiming it was a competition prize, bought at a charity shop, arranging to deliver orders to a friend’s house or hiding in a car boot. JW and CP3 also suggested that the common practice of sharing images of yarn stash, such as those in Figure 25 was a way the makers could not just show off purchases or inspiring material, but also compare themselves to others and feel less extravagant.



For a few members, keeping and collecting yarn threatened to tip over into behaviours which threatened their wellbeing: For 7 members, the amount of yarn they possessed was a stressor as they considered the amount of money spent on or space given over to their making. This included RP, who felt “ashamed” and concerned that she perceived similarities between her yarn purchases and uncontrolled, hoarding behaviours. Sharing an image of her stash, LD sought advice from other participants in how she might move away from the obsessive hoarding of yarn which made her feel ill:

All this makes me so overwhelmed that i feel sick, so am trying to knit my way through my stash but i find when i knit i am not enjoying it that much as i know i am trying to do it to lessen my yarn and get caught up with that thought rather than enjoying the project i am doing, i think i have a problem. (LD)

Likewise, SB shared the struggles she was experiencing in managing “overwhelming”, “exploding” “mess” of stored yarn which “actually hurts my creativity”. For these three participants, wellbeing was negatively impacted by the yarn they kept.

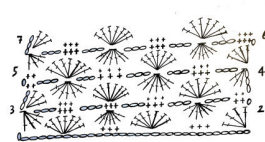
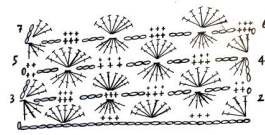


Fig. 25



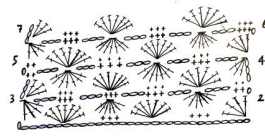
*Some members gathered all their stash together, in boxes, bags and bin liners, in order to post an image in the group. Sometimes this was to ask others if it was too much in comparison to participants' stash, whereas some posts were part of stating a commitment to stop purchasing new yarn and reduce the money or space consumed by yarn.*

Fig. 25: Image posted by WP



## A Woolly Wellbeing Story – GS

*When I found myself homeless and living in an RV on the streets, I had a couple balls of yarn, one set of needles and one hook. I went to the library checked out pattern books and started making cocoons and hats. Across from the library was a consignment shop and brought them my goods... Enough \$ to buy gas for the RV (had to keep moving to avoid the cops) and \$ for yarn at the thrift stores. After 4 yrs, a dear friend finally rescued me, got me a phone and introduced me to FB. I joined tons of knitting/crochet groups over the next 3 yrs but have since dwindled them down to just one. It's members (about 30) are now more precious to me than mere acquaintances... We share not just our creations but our life experiences, good and bad. Since I'm on SS many have also sent me 'care' packages of unwanted YARN! Now, what I don't use for Baby/Xmas Gifts, I use to make Hats for the local Homeless Shelter. I am finally living my dream, knitting and crocheting to my heart's content.*

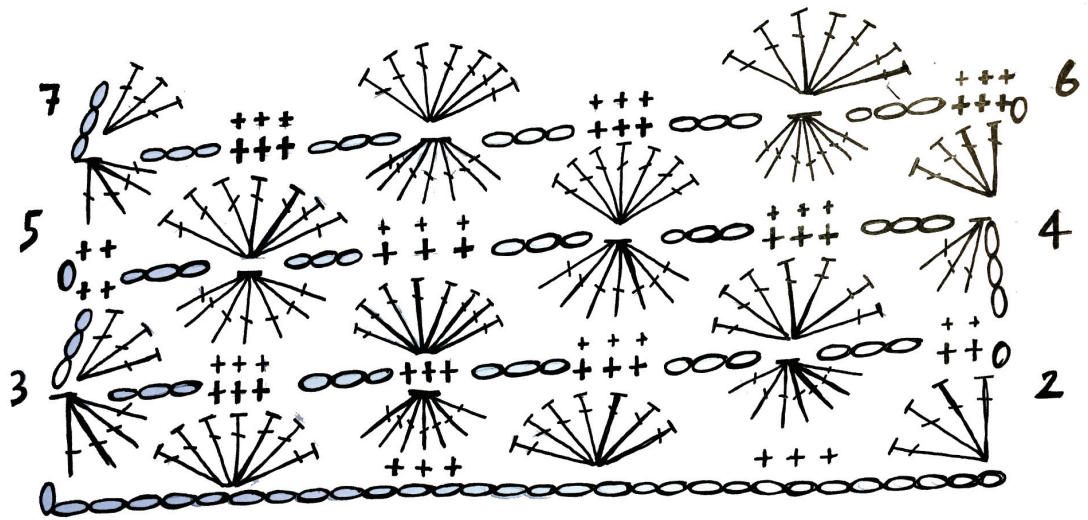
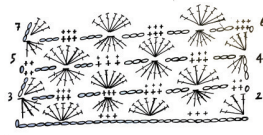


## 4.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented key findings from the rich data provided by participants in the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’. Concepts generated through qualitative thematic analysis have been used to organise findings, which demonstrate the beneficial impact of hand crafting in knit or crochet and sharing making on Facebook™. In addition, this study suggests challenges through identifying the limitations - even drawbacks - that making and sharing hand craft may have on perceptions of wellbeing for some participants.

Social connection was found to be a powerful influence on perceptions of wellbeing, where participants used sharing knit or crochet in a Facebook™ group as a way to connect with likeminded makers with a similar interest and also as a way of feeling connected to family members. Hand craft as a significant tool in supporting a sense of agency was a clear theme, where participants employed knit and crochet as an act of self-care, using making as mindful comfort and occasionally as a self-identified form of emotional therapy. Often, agency was found in making and gifting to others as a way offering a productive contribution to family or wider society through activism and charity work. Participants celebrated the ways that their wellbeing was enhanced by creative activity, taking pleasure in the colour and texture of yarn hand craft, in learning new skills and taking time to be playful and artistic for its own sake.

The most evocative and intriguing elements of these findings are those which are perhaps in opposition to the dominant ideology of how hand crafts may impact positively on wellbeing. Some participants indicated that both making alone and sharing on Facebook™ could exacerbate feelings of loneliness, point up schisms within the family or that their making could lead to physical pain and emotional distress. For others, the potential for making in knit and crochet to lead to destructive thinking, frustration and self-doubt was identified. These ‘negative’ voices - with implications of loneliness, pain, negative self-talk, frustration, doubt and guilt – are unusual findings in research on making for wellbeing and will support the most significant claims for original contribution to knowledge. The following chapter considers these findings within the context of existing literature.







## 5. DISCUSSION

As stated in Chapter 1, this research has sought to explore a space in the Academy where the voices of women amateur yarn-based hand crafters have not often been heard as they share their subjective experiences of wellbeing experienced through everyday practices of making in knit and crochet (Lampitt Adey, 2018; Hackney et al, 2016; Stannard and Sanders, 2015). It has situated the study within the social network system Facebook™, as women's embedded use of this platform to connect with others (Miller et al, 2016) and as a digital articulation of their yarn craft (Orton Johnson, 2014a; 2014b) is similarly under-researched.

The purpose of this study was to explore these key questions

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?
- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?

It is important that consideration of these questions moves beyond an assumed acceptance that subjective wellbeing may be supported through craft and acknowledge that participant experiences can be complex and nuanced.

The original contribution to knowledge offered through this thesis is discussed more fully during the following chapter. Contributions lie in the location of the research on Facebook™ as both a platform for gathering and the topic of data, where participants have reflected on the ethics of informed consent in research and on the ways that wellbeing can be affected in articulating their making by hand through a social media platform. The study consolidates understanding of the ways that wellbeing through connection with others can be facilitated by hand craft but pushes the boundaries of this into a digital space. It suggests that everyday creative making – both in knit and crochet hand craft and in sharing such making in a mediated form – should be given greater weight as a factor in enhancing hand crafters' perceptions of subjective wellbeing. Finally, this study posits that, if the potency of making in knit and crochet



for wellbeing is recognised, its powerful potential to elicit negative experiences must also be acknowledged and that understanding of the impact such yarn craft may have on subjective wellbeing needs to be more nuanced.

## 5.1. ENGAGING WITH DIGITAL RESEARCH

One of the unanticipated outcomes of the study was an insight into participants' views on aspects of the method, ethics and location of the research. They are included in this discussion as such views are intricately entangled with the work, threading together what members expect from a digital community where they share their making. These expectations relate to the ways in which they are protected in an ongoing conversation about ethics, how their views on the research process influence engagement and that views on what the 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' has meant to them forms part of participants' own reflections on the study.

### 5.1.1. Engagement Through the Platform

For some participants, engaging with the investigation process and discussing ethical issues in digital research was entirely *because* the project was accessible through social media. For those dealing with physical disability, mental health issues or social isolation, it was an opportunity to feel that one's voice mattered and that someone – another group member, the researcher and a potential future audience in presentation or publication - was listening. For RD, engaging in the group was a way to be heard, an opportunity to listen to others, as well as "get help or help someone else". These participants were not only concerned with exploring making via digital means but concerned with how the digital platform itself could facilitate their engagement (Marres, 2017).

One challenging affordance of the Facebook™ platform was the ways in which participants could feel their contributions were at risk of being made public. Throughout the study, issues regarding the ethics of conducting research in a digital space were made transparent to participants. There were dedicated posts, discussions and direct individual messages to remind group members that their confidentiality could not be guaranteed or to reflect on how (and if) shared sensitive material would



be used. PK wrote about how the convenience of being able to read “responses and add my own whenever it suits me” was balanced with considerations of choosing “albeit quite carefully, how much or how little I write and share”. Informed consent about the purpose of the group as members contributed to research was negotiated as part of an ongoing process throughout data collection. This was especially significant as the closed status of the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’ could not guarantee anonymity and participants were theoretically traceable (Henderson et al 2014) through image searches and was dependent on other members’ privacy setting or perspectives – for example where a contribution could be copied and shared beyond the group.

### 5.1.2. Engagement and Safety

In discussion threads surrounding the ethics of confidentiality, participants expressed an understanding of the issues surrounding the impossibility of guaranteeing anonymity in research online. A large number of comments were posted indicating that participants acknowledged that protecting their identity was not necessarily secure – but that accepting this problem became part of their decision process in engaging with the research (Mayne, 2016b). This ongoing dialogic approach (Henderson, et al, 2013) was carefully constructed to create trust in a supportive, collaborative atmosphere as part of an ethic of care (Capurro and Pingel, 2002) where participants felt included in the ethical practices designed to give them respect and a more equal footing in the research relationship (Schrijvers, 1991). Back’s (2013) warning that “claiming that participants are empowered through the research process conceals one of the inevitable unevenness of agreement, consent and participation” (p.18) is accepted, but participants were responsive to these efforts to address the power imbalance within the group created for study and with the researcher in the privileged position of interpreter.

Participants were aware of the dilemmas surrounding privacy, with a number of group members agreeing with Dawson’s (2014) idea of the complex balance of a digital contribution such as a Facebook™ post or comment being interpreted as either “a conversation in a public space [...] or a quiet chat behind closed doors” (p.433). Their views mirrored the acknowledgement by the International Council on Human Rights



(2011) that one's privacy is only partly under one's own control in the world of social media communication. Participants anticipated that posts to a public group were open access, but that a post to a personal page was more private and only accessible to identified 'friends'. This recognised that their own and, crucially, others' posts were 'not for public consumption' and should therefore be treated as private (Henderson et al, 2013) within the group. However, participants reflected that they took the decision to post their own comments in light of an understanding that such material was potentially not secure – a common response indicated a resigned acceptance that potentially nothing was secure if they decided to share it within the group (SP; RL). Nevertheless, they made decisions to do so in order to voice an opinion about their making, as a willing 'trade' for connection with other amateurs and as a tool for collaboration (CR).

With the gains of being part of a community being seen as valuable in the group, much labour and care went into its sustaining. In addition to the researcher, there were circa fifty participants who became committed to making the group a safe space for engagement through frequent posting and commenting. Using Facebook™ as a platform for research was also considered a benefit as it allowed participants to engage with research questions at their own pace; selecting the extent they wished to share personal information and to respond to one another's comments. Interactions were almost entirely reacted to in some way, whether through comments or 'likes', sending a message that communication within the digital setting of the group was recognised as being of value. Lovink, (2008) suggests that engagement in most digital networks is shallow and that the norm is rather to disengage, to be a lurker or passive member. That the group were so responsive to one another's contributions, providing over ten thousand reactions and over four thousand comments (See Fig X in Chapter Three: 3.4.2.2) indicates that participants were aware of "deeply felt connections of common experience and interest" (Evans, 2013, p.92) usually associated with physical groups and that, in sharing their thoughts on making and wellbeing, their engagement helped to develop a stronger bond. A lack of response can be perceived as a lack of care in a digital community, and members taking time to react to other participants and not just the researcher is an example of how a digital group can be "built and sustained



through practical actions of caring for, giving to or sharing with others” (Jamieson, 2013, p.19).

Additional threads were also developed to highlight both concerns and protocols regarding trolling or flaming – where negative or directly vindictive responses could derail the research. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no examples of this in the group: One potentially challenging post, where a participant was critical of another digital knit community, came through during the early hours of the morning, UK time and was responded to by a number of participants located in other time zones. They thoughtfully suggested that the group was not a suitable place for inflammatory comments as its focus was both on wellbeing and contributing to research and referred the original poster to the participant information guidelines on trolling. That the participants took this action said something about the ways they understood the need for protection and valued the community that was being built.

### 5.1.3. Engagement and Community Building

The nature of the closed group did appear to make participants feel secure in expressing ideas to a supportive community, reflecting Wellman and Gulia’s (1999) statements about the importance of perceiving companionship in a group organised by shared interest rather than shared geography (Mayne, 2016b). A response such as this was not unusual, making clear that participants were being considered in their decisions of what to post, taking the opportunity to focus on their hand craft and their wider needs:

There are statements and or photos I would never post on my personal timeline but will post in a "closed" group. Usually because the people in the group have become closer to me than the neighbor next door, not only because we share in common our crafts but because we share our everyday struggles (GS)

The group fostered a sense of belonging between participants who did not have contact with each other in the physical world, but with whom members could be vulnerable in sharing and asking for feedback on their knit or crochet made alone. The



group was also used as a sounding board, a place to “vent” and as a source which could provide a “cheerleader” (WL) or supportive friend when feeling challenged. In other words, the participants felt themselves to be part of a community.

The study demands a nuanced idea of what a community may be – like a physical social group, there were ‘lurkers’ and some participants with relatively sporadic engagement, but there was also an intense degree of engagement from some for whom the group became significant. This is especially interesting because the group was built with members who – barring a few exceptions - were not connected in physical world: Even where scholars have identified the growth of communities of interest accessed through social network systems, their assumption is that members will still know each other outside the digital group (Castells, 2001). It could be seen that the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’ operated as what boyd (2011) described as a ‘networked public’, where the technical affordances or architecture of Facebook™ helped to form participant engagement in an “imagined collective” (boyd, 2011, p.39). For example, members came to the research with an expectation of how knit and crochet groups tended to operate and used the comment structure to provide images and text which were addressed not just to the researcher but to each other. Whilst transparently begun as a closed Facebook™ group designed to facilitate a research project, it came to function as an independent community much as other groups of its nature located in digital space: Members shared more than requested directly through weekly ‘research questions’, came to rely on support from one another and - administered by keen participants - continues with an after-life following this PhD research.

Interactions in the research group illustrated how participants negotiated and appropriated affordances in a Facebook™ closed group to craft a hybrid space which blurred the boundaries between public and private, using their niche interest in knit, crochet and wellbeing to build social connection with one another as they determined to reach out beyond a narrow personal sphere to create and connect with others (Lindgren, 2017) with similar interests. This has links to Oldenburg’s (1989/1999) ‘third place’ or Slevin’s (2002) concept of locality in creating community identity through shared values and understanding, although these specific interpretations of locality did not operate in a digital place. Rather, the group can be perceived as an example of Papacharissi’s “imagined geographies of place” (2011, p.306) which can provide



gratifications and connections protected by a sense of privacy. The imagined geography of the research group, made possible by the affordances of the platform structure, was described by the most engaged participant:

with the advances of social networking the field of textile arts and how they benefit each individual has grown tremendously. The group itself, to me, is not just to express myself but to see how others feel either through their words or pics. It's a true connection based on a love of creating (GS)

This makes an explicit link between the craft of haptic making and its articulation through digital means and is the focus of the following section.

## 5.2. MAKING AS HAPTIC, AS DIGITAL

Findings from the study indicated that crafting with yarn by hand and crafting a post to share making or a comment to praise the making of others were all aspects which could contribute to wellbeing. However, on the surface, these two elements of the haptic and the digital appear juxtaposed: How is it that an activity so closely connected to touch, the hand and comforting, natural material can be articulated through electronics, plastics, screens and an immaterial concept of space? This section expands on this paradox, considering the significances of touch for wellbeing as a form of knowledge, a way of bringing into being or a demonstration of care. It concludes with a reflection on the ways that echoes of touch and communication about making by hand have been embedded into everyday digital places by participants in the study.

### 5.2.1. Working with the Hand to Support Wellbeing

To work with the hand, connecting mind and body in practising dexterous skill is part of the creative experience (Malafouris, 2013). For makers in yarn, it is an opportunity to engage “in a dialogue with their hands and fingertips” (Shreeve, 1998, p.43), where mental reflection or challenge, combined with touch and tactile fibre can support subjective wellbeing. In a more conceptual sense, this may be because of the opportunity to exercise an experiential and tacit “silent knowledge” (Pallasmaa, 2009, p.20) - a ‘know-how’ so embedded that it may not even operate at a conscious level.





Lesley Millar (2013) suggests that the sensory ontology of knowing through touch helps to support the “informed imagination” (p.27) in understanding how things can be made and that through habitual use of the hand in craft, knowledge can be embodied within the flesh (Lichty, 2008). Holding creative skill in this way supports wellbeing through agency as the maker, like an alchemist (Barnett, 1998), can use their tacit understanding of how materials work to transform and re-make them as crafted products as well as metaphors for what is important to them. Members of the research group delighted in what their skilled fingers could produce, whether it was in fine work, demonstrating how a new technique had been mastered or simply in being able to create something other friends or family could not, such as LB3, who celebrated that she was known for her clever making skills: “it's what people know me for when people say oh I couldn't do that I don't have time skill or patience it tells me that they identify me as being someone who does have these things” (LB3). Alternatively, losing tacit skill through ill-health or ageing was, for some participants a significantly distressing experience, where a precious part of their way of being had been taken from them and was so evocatively described by (LG) as papers being “misfiled” in her brain.

It is useful at this stage to look more closely at Malafouris' (2013) ideas about how crafted objects come into being. His specialist interest is in architecture and mark-making in ancient and contemporary ceramics and how in the intertwining of fingers and material – of “minds and things” (Malafouris, 2013, p.9), engagement with the crafted object helps to create a record of being or of coming to be human. In considering the ways that “creating things which in turn create us” (Malafouris, 2013, p.43) he queries the moment when clay becomes a fixed product, existing in its own right as something external to and testament of the maker: Does this occur at the point where a design is conceived, the clay thrown, pot shaped or fired and glazed? Similarly, Metcalf (2007) considers the coming into being of a yarn crafted object, created from “formless thread” (p.7) by a maker's hand, thereby affirming their physical presence in “a statement that we still live in a body rich in potential” (p.7). To connect these ideas with those of Malafouris (2013), there are interesting implications for objects made in yarn where, considering the woven nature of textile, one movement of the hand through fingers, needle, hook, or scissors could mean that



whatever has been crafted can be unravelled and taken back to its original component of fibre thread; the work becomes undone and invisible (Twigger-Holroyd, 2017).

Echoes of these considerations are found throughout participant comments, embedded in the delight of finishing something the distress over the unfinished and the crises in ripping apart or throwing away works in progress which had become too overwhelming. This could have a troubling impact on one's sense of self as a maker – an idea which will be developed further in section 5.5.

Millar (2013) reflects on the lower hierarchy of the tactile over the visual, where what can be learnt, understood or affected by touch has been undervalued and therefore, significant meaning about its potential may be missed. If the interpretation above of the ephemerality and fragility of textiles is applied to making with yarn in knit and crochet, it layers another interpretation for the reasons why tactile fibre craft has been devalued or marginalised – it can simply disappear in a way that other handmade objects do not. Similarly, subjective perceptions of wellbeing may be affected by the way engagement with making in soft, impermanent materials is trivialised. This could be observed in the study, where some participants recounted how they had to battle to have their work appreciated – by parents who did not see the value in studying hand craft or by partners and children who were embarrassed by old-fashioned associations of knitting. Often, members relied on responses from each other to find praise and recognition of their haptic skill. Barnett (1998) suggested that hand craft “work speaks of its making [...] also something of the psychic process of subjectivity: the process by which we learn to take our place in the world” (p.144) and so the contradictory messages regarding the value of hand craft may also influence the way that makers see the worth of their own place or its potential to support wellbeing. Occasionally this is confronted, however, such as the participant who hated “when people look at me like I am a little woman” (RP) and deliberately set out to subvert others’ views by what she made.

### 5.2.2. The Tactile in Domestic Space

Making by hand at a slow pace and using soft, tactile fibre to craft textiles is often connected to the domestic sphere in caring for family and home. Hadjiyanni and Helle (2010) suggest that this sort of making uses the material to connect with immaterial



concepts about identity and belonging to a wider group – a crucial feature in perceptions of wellbeing, whether the relationships are directly linked to family members or through a commitment to others in need. In this way, crafted objects made in and for the home come to represent the “ongoing relationship between things and people” (Kelly, 2013, p.16) and are often closely associated with the roles of women and the domestic setting. CF perceived her making for others as a matchless “true act of selflessness” and MB described clothing made for children and grandchildren as “works of heart”. Shreeve (1998) particularly identifies knit and crochet items made as comforting wraps for children as symbolic of women’s maternal concern to provide warmth and protection, their tactile qualities providing a barrier to the outside world and a soothing fabric proximate to the skin (Pajackowska, 2005).

However, it may be argued that these ideas are somewhat essentialist, reinforcing women’s role as carers or subjugated within the domestic sphere and limiting understanding of how life may be enhanced in such a sphere. Pallasmaa (2009) indicates that “creative work calls for a double perspective: one needs to focus simultaneously on the world and on oneself, the external space and one’s inner mental space” (p.19). Therefore, repetitive, rhythmic stitch could also be used to provide space for reflection, soothing idleness or a way of signalling resistance (Felski, 2000) to domestic expectations, for example in PG’s sense of productivity through acting in opposition to her family’s devotion to American football in order to focus on her own hand craft. This may be seen as a method of deliberately taking up space for leisure, using knit or crochet at home for amateur women to claim time for their own pleasure or peace away from distractions and obligations from family or home where “it’s ‘me’ time when I’m doing it, otherwise its just a round of cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry day in day out” (JB).

Nevertheless, for many participants, there were clear associations between the soft tactile qualities of yarn which, alongside a time commitment in the slow pace of stitching, were seen as representative of love and care for others and a key component of their definition of what wellbeing means. Sometimes this was in the attitude of knit or crochet, holding the recipient in mind, even “in prayer” (SP) whilst making and indicating that through touch in the handmade, love and affection could be imbued into the crafted object. This reflects Millar’s (2013) suggestion that as the recipient



handles the finished work, their “touch and the touch of the maker conjoin and become one” (p.28), for example where a child’s sweater was created as a proxy for a grandmother’s embrace by AL and the physical touch of care could be communicated through the yarn fabric. Sharing images of making for children was a significant proportion of the images posted in the research group. Very occasionally this was of the item being held or worn by the child, but more frequently it was of the completed work displayed on a surface and occasionally a doll. The contribution of giving hand crafted items for one’s own family, or for unknown children in making for charity was a factor in perceptions of wellbeing for many participants, particularly where the soft, tactile qualities of yarn was used to represent care for others – to show, as JS and DT wrote, that they are loved. However, whilst sharing their handmade objects in the digital group may have been a further way for some participants to demonstrate affection by documenting it, for others it was the only route through which they would receive praise for their skill and time – not from the recipients, but from other makers.

### 5.2.3. The Digital as a Space for Making

In de Certeau’s (1984) work on everyday life, he uses ‘making’ as a broad term which can be interpreted as living or existing and describes how individuals search for a space which will mean their making is more visible, contributing to a strong, flexible fabric which can support their being in the world. His is a helpful metaphor, not only for its connection to textiles, but in the way that his ideas about how people operate in everyday life through their spatial practices can also be applied to the digital. He suggests that people attempt to transform the place where they ‘frequent’ or ‘dwell’ into somewhere more readable and where the characteristics or expectations of a place are clear. This is achieved through manipulating the place by introducing one’s own desires or purposes, ‘poaching’ the space in a disruptive fashion to open a place which allows users to fulfil their goals. Such an idea is useful in describing how participants have ‘poached’ a place within the Facebook™ platform to construct or operate in a community which supports their wellbeing through making and used it as a tool to make their craft practices visible (Luckman, 2014).

Pink, Ardevol and Lanzeni (2016) clarify how the material nature of activities such as making by hand and their digital articulations are “entangled elements of the same



processes, activities and intentionalities” (p.1). As the digital is embedded in all aspects of life, including the ways communication with friends and family is mediated by technology and social media platforms (Dourish, 2016), digital expressions of one’s own everyday making or seeking to learn about others’ making experiences becomes just another way the material can be enacted. This is expressed by AM2, in her comment that

I gain insight into others, again a sense of connection and inspiration. It is inspiring to see the work of other artists, hear / read the stories behind them as well as how people learned to do these crafts (AM2)

Horst and Miller (2013) see this digital element as more than a substrate, but a “constitute part of what makes us human” (p.4) as makers share their experiences of material culture and make links with others (Appadurai, 2013) to gain feedback, make connections and celebrate a common passion.

These approaches are similar to Evans’ (2013) concept of how the digital world may reconfigure what a “subcultural” (p.80) form of community may be, although Evans has significant concerns about the counterfeit nature of such a group. Whilst the flaws of a commercial or surveilling platform such as Facebook™ are accepted, the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’ was an interesting illustration of how members appropriated the affordances of a non-democratic participatory space (McNay, 2000) to try and seek their own ways of connecting, making and sharing together. This can be recognised in CR’s comment about the security risks of sharing in a Facebook group being balanced for her by positive rewards in collaboration and interaction, excitedly exclaiming “look at us all!”. Green and Singleton (2013) would suggest that such an appropriation, with a focus on emotional labour and community building, is an example of the gendering of digital space. Here, participants’ actions of learning, making, connecting, receiving and giving care (Hadjiyanni and Helle, 2010) are part of women’s work in increasing the “visibility of core areas of everyday life in the digital age” (Green and Singleton, 2013, p.35).

With specific reference to appropriating digital space for making in knit and crochet, Myzelev (2007) suggests that hand craft groups working in digital spaces are part of an attempt to “borrow some of the communal experiences from past generations” (p.155)



to address loneliness in the modern condition. However, this assumes a nostalgic, utopian ideal of community which was somehow more authentic or supportive in the past than that available to contemporary makers, as supported by EB's comments on how "things were different way back when ... it was a slower time in some ways, but harder in others". More positively, women's work in claiming a social, 'third' digital place to share knit and crochet can be seen as "harvesting the opportunities for the development of social capital ... through engagement with craft as well as their engagement with technology" (Minahan and Wolfram Cox, 2007, p.8).

#### 5.2.4. Digital Articulation of Making

In writing of the traditions of oral history in narratives by amateur sewers, Buckley (1999) posed the challenge to researchers to consider where the 'silences' were. This research posits that the closed group on Facebook™ is a contemporary alternative to document the lineages of female oral histories valued in the historical textile practice which Buckley explored. Pallasmaa (2009) described how the material object crafted by a maker allowed the "silent wisdom of the body and the mind" (p.117) to be heard by others. However, as has already been identified, the textile fabric of a knit or crochet item can be fragile and transient, slipping from the maker's view by being gifted elsewhere or through decay and unravelling. To return to Malafouris' (2013) question about when a manifestation of creativity has come into being, it may be that the use of a digital platform can be an alternative way to identify an object, providing a documented record which can be archived.

This reflects the connection between the digital and haptic where the sensory qualities of seeing and touching are represented through participant images, using a

plurality of communication, achieved equally through access to textural intelligence obtained through the manipulations and touching of material and through screen-based and virtual experience (Millar, 2013, p.31)

The affordances of the Facebook™ platform were used as tools to facilitate an understanding of the haptic knowledge possessed by makers. The prolific posting of photographs of knit and crochet objects in the research group invited other members



to imagine the sensory experience of touch and served as a request to bear witness to its existence. Some members, like CR2, were regretful of not taking and posting pictures before gifting hand crafted items to others, whilst others, like DB, provided a detailed account of her images as a way of celebrating their construction, such as in this bag for sock yarn:

I have a small inside pocket for some folding scissors, a small tape measure and a few stitch markers. It is long enough to hold my needles without putting undue pressure on the join of cable to needle I put point protectors on, roll the socks around the needles and stick them in the bag along side the skeins ... I use a ribbon as a drawstring, you can connect the ends of the ribbon and suspend it from your wrist to knit when standing. If the bag is made the right width, the skeins will stand up and the yarn will feed out the top of the bag perfectly (DB)

These actions were focused on increasing the visibility of making in yarn, seeking recognition for makers' skill but also that they are acknowledged as 'being there', marking a point in time (Turney, 2009).

Kate Orton Johnson's (2014a; 2014b) work on Ravelry, the yarn craft social media platform, has significant relevance for this study, as she explores how making by hand is digitally articulated through social networks. It is possible to transfer her interpretations to Facebook™ groups as a space for participation where makers in knit and crochet can integrate their practices with digital affordances so that "boundaries and practices of knitting are extended as material handicrafts converge with Web 2.0 technology" (Orton Johnson, 2014a, p.305). This supports an exploration of creativity that can be both personal and social as haptic practices are augmented by the digital context which moves beyond the private and domestic into a social space, "adding another (digital) layer to the tactile process" (Orton Johnson, 2014a, p.315) of making with yarn. In this study, the idea that using Facebook™ to share making was a key factor in 'becoming' a knit or crochet maker, as the less experienced learnt basic skills and could seek advice, and where even accomplished makers could develop new ways of seeing and constructing with yarn. In particular, the sharing of images and receiving feedback in comments and reactions was a powerful way in which the group operated:





This was an embedded part of engagement and pleasure in the group (Orton Johnson, 2014b) as participants used the space as an ‘other’ archive (Sinclair, 2015) which digitally documented their process of making. Normally undervalued, it was the contact with the digital platform which moved their hand craft beyond a personal, domestic sphere and enhanced status through connecting with others. These connections are the focus of the following section.

### 5.3. MAKING CONNECTIONS

In her work on embroidery undertaken in physical groups or alone, Emma Shercliff (2015) writes of the shape of a maker’s body, curved in an “inward looking posture, with the head bowed over the work”. This image has an application for this research, where the position of head, arms and hands over making – also described by Corkhill et al, (2014) as a “buffer to the outside world” (p.42) supported participation in deep conversations. For many participants reflecting on their making, a similar posture over screens of laptops, tablets and smartphones could be perceived as a way to open up a space for participation and connection through the digital.

The same posture – over tactile yarn or glass screen - provides an element of control over the ways in which makers can connect: Just “as an individual might also be released from our shared social space to occupy a solitary, quiet space even though she is physically present in the group” (Shercliff, 2015, p.202) the affordance of the Facebook™ platform supports makers in choosing to engage at different levels, whether connecting with others through sharing yarn craft, or in electing to connect inwardly with the self through reflection. Both of these forms of connection, facilitated through the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’, were perceived as having a significant impact on perceptions of wellbeing.

#### 5.3.1. Connecting with Other Makers

Gauntlett’s (2011) popular work celebrates that ‘making is connecting’ and emphasises the point that connection with others is essential for wellbeing. However, it is necessary to consider the different forms connection may have for amateur knit and crochet craftswomen, how these are bound up in their making “practices, networks,



meanings and values” (Hackney, 2013a, p.171) and the contribution it may make to feelings of agency, creativity or community. Hand craft groups operating in digital space offer a “contemporary equivalent of the ubiquitous yet easily over-looked spaces of historical domestic crafts” (Hackney, 2013a, p.183) with the affordances of freedom to access, play and connect with others brought together by their common interest of everyday making in knit and crochet.

Coming together to connect with others and experiencing a sense of belonging is the most clearly identified factor in supporting subjective wellbeing (Linton, Dieppe and Medina-Lara, 2016), where multiple studies indicate that social connection – and the feeling that support is available if needed – are key measures. Similarly, Ryff and Keyes (1995) suggested that a focus on positive relationships with others, shared empathy, concern for the welfare of others and positive, warm friendships mean that ‘belonging’ is the greatest component in subjective wellbeing. Knit and crochet can act as “a vehicle for making social connections” (Corkhill et al, 2014, p.37) such as those identified in broader studies, as the act of making together often in physical proximity, eyes averted from one another, can support intimate conversations and deepening relationships, provide space for learning, constructive critique, support, agency and friendship. This was succinctly echoed by AH2, who wrote about the inspiration and connection she had found through Facebook crochet groups, where posting about her hand craft

makes me feel good about my crochet ... It has certainly helped me to keep busy and feel part of a community. Now there are not enough hours in the day to make all projects I would like to do. I love to see what others achieve, the possibilities are endless. Also helped me to appreciate the internet more!! (AH2)

The Stitchlinks Study (Corkhill et al, 2014; Riley et al, 2013) is focused on the ways that wellbeing was enhanced through connecting with others whilst occupied in the repetitive act of stitch, even if participants were not engaged in a simultaneous activity. There is a heightened difference with groups operating in digital space in contrast to physical groups, as members are more likely to be making alone and embedding their practices of sharing on a social media platform by contributing comments or images.



What implications are there for wellbeing supported through these kinds of connections? Otto von Busch (2011) clarifies that connection through making is not necessarily achieved through a collective or collaborative experience, but may instead focus on broader abilities, skills and passions, which can be the catalyst for sharing with others beyond connections in a physical group. It may be that the group operating in digital space offers engagement for the less confident, the quiet or makers who – for a myriad of reasons, may find attending or engaging in a physical group with others too challenging (Hackney et al, 2016). AK3 expressed this when she described how digital groups tend to be welcoming to beginner crafters as she reflected “I find it useful to feel connected to other crafters at unsocial hours I can hunt down ideas when the children are in bed, or chat to people about their current projects. I’m not confident enough to post photos of my work yet, as I see so many marvellous things, so that’s sometimes a negative point for me”. In digital groups focused on making, participants are not making concurrently, but their practices are not divergent either: Their processes in knit and crochet are simply asynchronous and what is ‘invisible’ when making connections with others is made visible through being invited to imagine using descriptive language in posts or comments and in providing photographs uploaded through a smartphone or similar device.

### 5.3.2. Connecting in Age

One of features of connecting through hand craft is the way practice can draw individuals together so that absorption and engagement in making reduces feelings of isolation (Hackney et al, 2016; Sennett, 2012). This response is considered particularly helpful in managing loneliness in the ageing population, as evidenced in Reynold’s work focusing on older makers (1997; 2000; 2010) or in Piercy and Cheek’s (2004) study on ‘tending and befriending’ in quilting groups. Here, older women crafters acted as the “kin-keepers” (Piercy and Cheek, 2004, p.31) in bonding with family through the crafted artefact, in ensuring the legacy of hand craft skill in passing on to others and in performing generative behaviours which contribute to wellbeing in others’ lives and their own. This resonates with member comments about recalling older family members, but also has wider implications, as in TD2’s comment about her job as an in-home careworker where she turns to hand craft in the long evenings:



Most love it when I crochet during that time. Brings up memories for many, either of a favorite family member who used to do handwork, or of the time when they themselves did. I feel that this part of my job is just as important as any other part (TD2)

Sharing in interest groups is a way that Age UK (2015) has suggested could create an environment which could reduce levels of isolation and the charity Knit for Peace (2017) indicates that coming together to knit and crochet can increase personal resilience to support wellbeing. However, there are problematic justifications in this report with successful outcomes expressed primarily through reducing dependency on healthcare and demands on the National Health Service.

It is important to consider what connection through digital groups could offer ageing participants. Khalaila and Vitman-Schorr (2018) posit that engaging in digital networks may support quality of life for older people, especially where there is limited contact with family, but that such practices could also increase loneliness where digital activity is deliberately used to displace physical social contact. In contrast, they suggest that new contacts and relationships with others through digital platforms can enhance feelings of connection, notably where participants feel they can control their social interactions – just as Miller et al. (2016) indicated the wellbeing potential of scalable sociality. An illustration of this is in AM5's comments that "I like the freedom to participate when I want or feel like it. I suffer from anxiety and being able to do things in my own time frame helps me manage some of those feelings. One thing I do need though is community and the FB group has given me that in a way I can manage".

Nowland, Necka and Cacioppo (2018) highlight that research exploring social media use by older people is limited and contradictory - it may be found to enhance new connections and reduce loneliness or equally increase loneliness through withdrawing from society to the screen, escaping social interactions. They also point out that there is no work which examines the affective nature of digital groups as the specific uses and motivations of group membership are very complex, but that study in this area would give much richer understanding of how wellbeing may be enhanced by engagement through digital means. Their work does suggest that where digital spaces are used by lonely to displace physical connections, they may need help in findings



ways to use social media networks to enhance their connections for wellbeing – such as through groups focused on an activity. Moreover, the authors emphasise the potential for sharing updates and images in groups to be a powerful support for wellbeing, as “it may be that the very act of sharing is a way to feel as though one is connecting with others ... posting status updates on Facebook™ may also increase future social interactions” (Nowland, Necka and Cacioppo, 2018, p.75) as users reconnect with one another if they are informed of or intrigued by each other’s stories. This can be observed in a comment from AK4, who expresses her joy in the ways that yarn craft groups on Facebook™ support her in the digital and physical world:

so many creative groups from all over the world - wich give me so much inspiration - i also enjoyed creative circles in person from these fb groups -  
Nice to write for help i a group and 2 minutes later a member answers -  
very giving for me and my creativity (AK4)

One of the challenges in this realm of study is that the interpretation of connecting through digital means is perceived as a way of strengthening ties with those known in the physical realm, but in large digital groups designed to connect through sharing making, there may be no overlap of these connections. In the case of the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’, a handful of members knew one another, having joined the project as friends but the majority, spread over the world, did not know one another. Matook, Cummings and Bala, (2015) suggest that ‘online’ connections such as these are assumed to be of lower quality, reinforce weak ties and result in greater experiences of loneliness.

It is important to counter this through examining the value placed on connections made in the group which, irrespective of distance and unlikely to be associated with other members beyond the digital group, became significant ties through a shared interest in knit or crochet (Mayne, 2016a). It may be helpful to present a lengthier comment to illustrate this from RY, who – with family scattered, living remotely, introverted but interested in many things – wrote about her engagement in Facebook™ groups and the connections she felt with other members:

these folks have become very close in spite of us living in many parts of the world. We support each other emotionally, offer advice and suggestions,



and have even helped each other financially [...] I think FB is different things for different people. For some, it becomes a way to interact without having to deal with face-to-face confrontations. Some people would be unable to ask the questions they do or speak about certain things to anyone without the veil FB provides. And for some, FB gives them a huge round of others to connect to so that they are never really "alone." It takes the place of the local pub, the group support sessions, the clubs (like reading groups, craft gatherings, moms' clubs, etc.) [...] FB gives an easy way to stay connected to others of our species. (RY)

Making connections through the Facebook™ group was a way to find and craft links with one's knit and crochet 'tribe' or 'people'.

It is also worth noting here that wellbeing as a part of health over a life course may decline in older age but there is also a need for research which highlights awareness of what may be needed to enhance connection for wellbeing as a lifelong process. This was emphasised by engagement from younger members of the research group who were just starting out in the workplace, young mothers and in four cases, college students. There is very little work which looks at wellbeing benefits for younger women amateur makers: Titus and Sinacore (2013) have published on wellbeing outcomes in young healthy women, but these were emerging trained artist makers rather than home hand crafters, who found social contact, support and advice through making physically alongside others in studio spaces. For some of the young women in the study, connections with other amateur makers were only available through digital platforms, such as CW2, who touchingly posted that "I'm very lonely, Ha ha!" as she described the challenge of accessing physical groups whilst caring for a young family. Similarly, HF found connection through the research group as "I don't have 'hooky' friends living nearby and am not a member of a happy hooker group. I am isolated as such I think" as she worked long hours as part of establishing herself at work.

Members described how sharing making in digital groups could improve their sense of agency and self-esteem through getting feedback from experienced makers who understood the skills they were developing (Mayne, 2016a). This is illustrated by a comment from TP, who explained "I crochet to relive stress. I am a high school student and sometimes the workload can be very difficult and stressful" but that the



“strangers” who engaged with her in the research group were important connections as they understood her challenges in learning to make and provided emotional support.

### 5.3.3. A Caveat About Caring Connections

Women’s work in community building through talk is often referred to as gossip and devalued, but it is much more about an ethic of care (Tronto, 1982) as friendships are made or maintained (Gilligan, 1982). This is a “relational care which reaches out to the other and grows in response” (Noddings, 1984, p.11). There are problematic implications here, however, in reinforcing the marginalization of women’s interests, limiting them to emotional labour and the domestic or an essentialist concept of femininity. As Friedman (1995) points out, a commitment to care work “resonates with the experience of many people because their experiences are shaped in part by cultural myths and stereotypes of gender” (p.65). This was certainly exemplified in the research group, where there was a dominant focus on making as a way of connecting with and showing love for others, especially children. CT described this as the same nurturing she equated with feeding her family, whereas MR reflected how making to show others they were loved was as much about fulfilling a need in oneself.

For these participants, their delight in making was part of a proud commitment to domestic care, where knit and crochet practice could constitute how being a woman – and often how being a mother or grandmother - was performed (Pollanen and Voutilainen, 2017). As highlighted in Chapter One, it is necessary to be mindful that a study of this type does not reinforce the marginalization it is exploring (Buckley, 1999; Tronto, 1982): The research acknowledges space for these influences on subjective wellbeing, as “caring practices embed approaches to knowledge that emphasize the significance of contexts and particularities” (Bowden, 1992, p.185) for some participants but also has to be open to challenge (Friedan, 1983). LB commented on this as she wrote:

I think as women, that we are taught that being mothers, homemakers, artists, crafters ... is somehow not as good or not important enough to be respected. I have had to fight this my entire life. I have overcome this, for





the most part. But it has taken a lifetime to gain this strength. I just hope that we can help each other be strong, be proud, and keep collecting what we need to do our craft and find JOY from it (LB)

This was underscored with LG's reminder that the demand drilled into women to "do something" through making – to contribute to the family or to ensure they were not idle – fed into women's subjugation. It is important to affirm that both of these ways of valuing what is made possible by women's agency and friendships in the research group contributed to an understanding of how amateur making supported wellbeing through connections with others.

#### 5.3.4. Connecting with the Self

The meaningfulness of knit or crochet as activities undertaken in solitude and part of a quiet connection to the self is an under-researched aspect of study (Corkhill et al, 2014, p.49), perhaps dominated by a greater focus on the ways that social interaction can support wellbeing. Certainly, it is noted in Morrow-Howell and Gehlert (2012) that activities which may support wellbeing, undertaken in solitude, are generally not included in criteria of social engagement for ageing well. However, it is interesting to reflect on the repetitive movement of hand and yarn looping, knitting together and making connections in different ways. Shercliff (2015) writes that "the rhythms and patterns of hand stitching reflect on the rhythms and patterns of [...] self-reflexivity" (p. 188) in addition to patterns of attachment in the social realm. In her work on embroidery, she suggests that the reverie created by the repetitive movement of hands and fingers can support the "occupation of a private space" (Shercliff, 2015, p.196) where the act of making can have the effect of slowing or stopping time to open up an opportunity for contemplation. Participants reflected on this aspect of how wellbeing could be supported by focusing on the self, for example in PG's comment that

the simple act of working with my hands is soothing to me. If I'm frustrated about something, that is when I find myself reaching for a basic, repetitious pattern where my hands seem to go through the motions without conscious thought (PG)



It may seem a contradiction that quiet, solitary making for connecting with the self was then shared and communicated within the group. However, posts on this topic were reflective, supporting members in thinking about the emotional, intellectual and aesthetic aspects of their yarn crafting (Metcalf, 1994) and emphasized the value of their personal narratives (McNay, 2000) beyond making social connections with other makers. This comment, for example, shows MF reflecting on the multi-generational tradition of hand craft she is engaged in:

I find the process makes me slow down, almost pause my hectic life which, in turn is a little like time travelling. I feel connected to past generations through the rhythm of the repeated actions, knowing that my Mum, Nanny, Great Nan must have used the same actions (MF)

Likewise, KC reflected on the different things knit and crochet has meant to her over time, from calming influence, mode of resistance, nurturer and now a way of claiming her place in the world:

it has gone from that to a balancing of my thoughts and emotions, being able to stand out and say I am not just the little wife, or the sister who could sew, or the daughter who provided all the baby blankets so Mom could give them away, I have found that in the past few years it has become my way of saying Hey I still exist, I may be down, I am not providing because of my disabilities but that does not mean bury me, there is still a lot of beauty to me (KC)

Sharing significant private reflections was in part about inviting others in to celebrate moments of quiet creativity, which is the focus of the next section.

#### 5.4. THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVITY

A view of the last twenty years sees repeated calls for further research into everyday creativity: Tulloch (1999) identified how “creativity which emanates from an individual is not simply concerned with creating and making objects, but is simultaneously about maintaining and representing the individual, the self” (p.112) and suggested that



creativity in making with textiles in particular was significant in crafting a sense of belonging. This also has connections to McNay's (2000) work in challenging ideas about agency that do not take account of the capabilities and dynamic creativity of an individual in using the autonomy and reflection facilitated through creative agency to help shape the self over time. Gauntlett (2011) similarly reflected on the processes of creativity that may have a "transformative impact on the sense of self" (p.ix) in finding ways to 'become' as an individual and find social connections with others. Most recently, Amabile (2017) has made the case for exploring non-work practices and the everyday creativity of 'ordinary' people. Her justifications for this are findings that emerge from expanding earlier works focused on creativity in the workplace (Amabile, 2013; Amabile and Kramer, 2011) where positive motivations, emotions and perceptions were both created by and fed further creativity, affecting participants' quality of life "in ways that we are only beginning to understand" (Amabile, 2017, p.5).

A key outcome of this research is a clearer understanding of participants' views of their own agency in using knit and crochet as a way to be creative which acts as an outlet from stresses in daily life or as a celebration of self-expression. Participants associated knit and crochet with an opportunity to be "Happy, relaxed, proud and ooh, creative" (CR) so strongly that it indicates a discrete and specific way through which perceptions of subjective wellbeing may be enhanced.

#### 5.4.1. The Impact of 'Being Creative'

Tucked away in the annual reports section of the website for Kirklees Council - a metropolitan district in West Yorkshire, UK (Hoot Creative Arts, 2016) and as evidence for submission to the All Party Parliamentary Group enquiry into creative arts and wellbeing (London Arts in Health Forum, 2017) are descriptions of the work of a local mental health arts organisation – Hoot Creative Arts. Over 2014-2015, in collaboration with their service users, the organisation refined their use of the NEF (2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011) criteria of ways to support wellbeing and began working with and promoting their own approach of 'Six Ways to Wellbeing', where 'Be Creative' was identified as having a singular effect on perceptions of subjective wellbeing (Hoot Creative Arts, 2016). Outcomes from their 'Out of the Blue' (mental health wellbeing) and 'Breathing Space' (dementia) groups indicated that opportunities for creative



expression, the reward of a sense of accomplishment and achievement as well as the community building elements of making with other supportive individuals had an overwhelmingly positive impact on wellbeing and merited a specific focus in their work moving forward. Whilst not adopted more broadly, it forms a helpful precedent in exploring how this association between creativity through knit and crochet and perceptions of subjective wellbeing have been made by participants as they repeatedly describe their 'need' to be creative in their everyday lives.

#### 5.4.2. Why Everyday Creativity?

Csikszentmihalyi (1992 / 2012; 1996 / 2013) describes the 'flow' of being absorbed in a creative act which "generates its own internal force" (p.348) to ward against depression and increase resilience in individuals' capacity to meet complex challenges. His perspective on this as everyday creativity – small 'c' creativity which is not associated with genius or innovation – is connected to creating as part of joy, not gain. Through these encounters in making, 'flow' is experienced through receiving feedback from the created phenomena, meeting a challenge at the edge of one's capabilities, the falling away of worry or self-consciousness and a sense that time has been lost. The intense feeling of being in 'flow' is identified as "autotelic" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996 / 2013, p.113) – that is, as an end in itself rather than being associated with the product. Finally, feelings of happiness are encountered after the process is complete, not whilst *in* flow as the creative experience has the capacity to generate but is not in itself happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992 / 2012) and in fact can be considered a distraction from 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996 / 2013). There is potential for further exploration of women's experiences of creativity and flow experiences in making here, where some participant comments challenge these descriptions. For example, GC provided a comment which exemplified a 'flow' state in writing that "the world can actually momentarily cease to exist when the wool and pattern work in harmony", but pausing to look at, handle and admire the emerging artefact was as much a part of the creative process and JB4 described the experience of 'flow' affecting her the "instant" she picked up her hook and which lasted a long time.

In a review of studies exploring creative arts participation and its impact on emotional wellbeing for young people, Bungay and Vella-Burrows (2013) highlighted the ways



that a strong sense of self, feeling of purpose, opportunity for personal expression and engagement through social support were all entangled in opportunities for creativity. In particular, freedom for creative expression and an environment which prioritised social support through making could have a significant impact on building confidence and self-esteem. This was illustrated by participants like RL, who described that using crochet on her “bad days” helped as she felt “I don't have so much time to think the bad thoughts, love the sense of achievement it brings and I feel I am contributing to carrying on a wonderful tradition”, with many factors contributing to her ability to manage her wellbeing.

#### *5.4.2.1. The ‘problem’ with everyday creativity*

Both Hawkins (2017) and Edensor, Leslie, Milligan and Rantisi (2009) highlight that the “vernacular creativities of hobbyists” (Hawkins, 2017, p.9) is often unacknowledged and excluded by a focus on creativity based on its contribution to the economy and industry. This is part of a wider issue in perceiving art as created by those in privileged, canonised positions which contributes to what Belfiore (2015) described as the narrow “impact rhetoric” (p.96) on value in the arts, fixated on creativity as an element in socio-economic strategy (Reckwitz, 2017) where the individual may be transformed through exposure to formal ‘culture’ in institutionalised settings. In addition, there is a dominant argument about creativity as the home of genius, original, innovative and culture changing talent and Csikszentmihalyi (2013; 1996) is not the only writer on the subject who suggests that women’s creativity - working in the domestic sphere or as a way of nurturing - as invalid. Participants instead valued the potential for their own individual creative expression and experience which can build self-esteem and celebrate their achievements, such as AD, KM and SP, who regularly described their work as painting and art or themselves as artists, claiming status for their personal routes to creativity.

In sharing everyday knit and crochet creativity on Facebook™, participants invited others in to view their processes. This was observed especially in photographs shared of a work in progress from casting on to a completed artefact, yarns still twisted in their ball or skein as colour choices were being debated, or in providing images of their places of making – rooms, sheds and chairs which were their chosen environment for



creativity (see the section on 'Home' in Appendix 10b). Csikszentmihalyi (1996/2013) emphasised the key influence of environment, network or context in supporting creativity, where places and their affordances had the capacity to provide access to a creative domain, enriching and enhancing creativity in everyday life. This thinking is expanded by Hawkins (2017) in considering the "micro geographies of the body that is thinking and practicing" (p.2) as a significant place for creativity. In the context of this study, it is useful to apply these ideas to reflect on how Facebook™ groups can offer a different spatial dimension, making a place where creativity can be performed in digital space as a way of celebrating it and communicating creative practices to other everyday makers.

#### 5.4.3. Knit and Crochet as a Way to 'Be Creative'

Vernacular creativities (Edensor et al, 2009; Hawkins, 2017) such as knit and crochet are understood as embodied material practices which can support wellbeing and although notions of craft have been affected by pejorative historical interpretations, making for those who are loved or simply using hand craft as a way of 'getting by' in emotional terms are acknowledged as valuable creative engagements. Johnson (1998) suggests that it the action of making, "grounded in materials, processes, techniques; as a way of working and thinking which involves the whole person: body and mind. A bodily intelligence" (p.17) which can influence subjective perceptions of wellbeing. This is illustrated as an opportunity to connect mind and body by focusing on the rhythm of the hands - a feature identified in hundreds of comments. Similarly, the 'flow' experienced through yarn craft interpreted by Lampitt Adey (2018) as full engagement in a task which challenges the maker, offers them control and autonomy and joy in both process and product is reflected in the comments shared to the group. This is illustrated by DS in "It gives me something to do with my hands, relaxes me, gives me something to focus on, allows me to be creative and I just love the sense of accomplishment seeing a project coming along".

Corkhill et al, (2014) clarify that being actively creative rather than passive or frozen in the face of challenges can contribute to perceptions of wellbeing and that "knitting provides purpose, creativity, success, reward and enjoyment that is particularly important in groups who have no experience of these in other aspects of life" (p.41).



The comment above from DS continues with “No matter what is going on that is out of my control I can control the crochet” and is echoed by comments such as this from BC2, who describes her challenges with mental health but that working with yarn helps her to “hang on” and “focus on something else entirely and forget about all that for a while”. With knit and crochet providing focus and purpose, there are important implications for wellbeing in facilitating ways to feel proud or distracted from negative thoughts. Creative hand craft similarly offers an opportunity to be stretched through working at the edge of one’s capabilities and see ways to overcome challenges by providing a sense of control and in simply finding ways of ‘being’ through making. However, knit and crochet are not magical activities which have the capacity to cure all ills – for some participants, their making did not have the calming and healing effect they wished for and in some cases could cause problematic issues. These are the focus of the following section.

## 5.5. THE NEED FOR NUANCE: NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS IN KNIT AND CROCHET FOR WELLBEING

The most significant contribution of this research is its consideration of the negative impact on wellbeing for amateur women who engage in knit and crochet and who share on Facebook™. Throughout the project, participants expressed concerns about the ways that hand craft could exacerbate or introduce feelings of isolation, physical pain and emotional distress such as frustration, anxiety and negative self-talk. Whilst not widespread, such views are significant in emphasising that knit or crochet and sharing with others in digital space is not a homogenous experience and that it is important to be mindful of the full potential range of its effects.

For some participants, wellbeing was affected by increased physical pain in hands, arms, shoulders, neck and back as it exacerbated a variety of inflammatory and muscular-skeletal conditions. For others, it was related to anxieties connected to the digital platform such as in feelings of increased isolation on observing others’ making on Facebook™ where, as expressed by GC, loneliness can be brought more sharply “into focus”. In the main, however, it was the act of knit and crochet itself that – for some participants and at certain points – had contributed to negative feelings of





subjective wellbeing through loneliness, emphasising schisms within the family, physical and emotional pain, cycles of negative thinking, frustration and self-criticism and anxiety about hoarding behaviours. This led only a few participants – GD and AR – to write of their need to give up on their love of hand crafts altogether – a loss which in itself had a negative impact on wellbeing.

Writers on creativity and leisure do acknowledge the capacity for actions to impact negatively on wellbeing. Csikszentmihalyi (1996 / 2013) goes so far as to say this is likely, and that alongside the enjoyment of participating in tasks which support ‘flow’, the “openness and sensitivity of creative individuals often exposes them to suffering and pain” (p.73). This may be because of the “discrepancy between creative achievement and creative success” (Reckwitz, 2017, p.222) as perceived by the self or others, exhaustion, depression or distress at being unable to find ‘flow’, feeling obligated, that the work is devalued or at the mercy of out of control compulsive behaviours – all of which are often “unintended realities” (Reckwitz, 2017, p.221) of engaging in the creative sphere. It should be noted that in general, these two thinkers are focused on a particular form of creativity appertaining to innovative, domain-changing creativity, rather than the everyday practices of the hobbyist, but the possibilities are raised for this too: Stebbins (2015) emphasises that engaging in creative leisure activities will frequently arouse a full range of emotional responses from delight and pride in fulfilment to negative emotions which could be “destabilising, destructive or disturbing” (p.140). Within the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’, this could range from BB calling herself choice names in frustration, to AN’s anxiety escalating as she struggled to manage projects she had begun.

Examples of what this may look like in amateur hand craft can be seen in Twigger-Holroyd’s (2017) work on making clothing in reflections on the hypercriticality of home-sewers regarding the garment they have made, although it is noted that making in a digital or physical group could enable the maker to see their work more positively through others’ eyes. Liddle et al. (2013) write about the frustrations and impatience in textile art therapies but suggest that older women are more likely to accept these feelings as part of the making process. Finally, Stalp’s (2006) focus on quilters resonated with findings in the research as participants shared their stories of negotiating space for their making, the stigma of hoarding and anxieties or guilt about



'stashing' yarn. Largely this came across humorously rather than being "saddened by the deceit they practice" (Stalp, 2006, p.116), with collecting yarn being celebrated as a survival strategy (JB4), or a "treasure trove" (EB; KW4) to inspire creativity. However, others expressed significant concern about the anxiety, stress and shame of hoarding behaviours (RP; LD; SB) which felt overwhelming and impacted on their wellbeing.

The dominant ideology in the Academy regarding arts for wellbeing is that engaging in creative activities - including making in knit and crochet - have an uncomplicated and unrelentingly positive effect on participants' wellbeing. Promotion of creative engagement - singing together, gardening, dancing and painting to textile crafts - has been integrated into education about health messages and used as case studies in justifications of policy from global organisations from the WHO to the UK government and local authorities (Fancourt, 2017). In part, this appears to be because of a perceived capacity for creative activities to reduce the intensity of loneliness, isolation and mental health challenges that face so many individuals accessing care services and that referral to 'arts in health' activities may save the National Health Service millions of pounds (APPGAHW, 2017a). This in turn can be read as part of the refocusing of responsibility for managing wellbeing onto individuals (Sointu, 2005) rather than issues in societal infrastructure or governmental funding (White, 2018). As a result, studies which review arts in health activities (Fujiwara and MacKerron, 2015; Staricoff, 2004), charity reports such as that from Knit for Peace (2017) and governmental inquiry (APPGAHW, 2017a) seem to focus exclusively on the beneficial impact on wellbeing. This reflects a tendency for investigations into how subjective wellbeing may be measured or used as evidence for policy making to reproduce similar interpretations (Oman and Taylor, 2018).

It is therefore important to be transparent about the range of negative impacts on wellbeing that knit and crochet could bring to participants in this study. These could be through bringing loneliness more sharply into focus by observing others' connections or making and feeling isolated in comparison, or could emphasise familial disconnection in feeling no one understood or appreciated their interests. The act of knit and crochet could cause physical pain, with muscular or skin conditions suffering through working with yarn and hooks or needles and in exacerbating inflammatory conditions like arthritis. Emotional pain in increasing feelings of distress and frustration



about the hand craft itself or in allowing space for negative thoughts to dominate. Finally, for some participants, collecting and ‘stashing’ yarn had become a damaging problem, affecting their financial situation or making them feel overwhelmed and guilty. DB reminded the group that making in knit and crochet was not enough to “fix” something as complex as subjective perceptions of wellbeing:

For some, on some days, fiber cannot fix everything. When I get into a very bad place, I am aware that if I'm knitting, crocheting or stitching I can find myself in a very bad cycle of negative self-talking [...] If I still find the chatter in my head too loud I have to put the handwork down and find something else to distract it. Usually that will involve another person in some form of communication. Handwork helps. But it is not a panacea (DB)

Within this, of course, participants continued to make with yarn, feeling that some aspects of negativity were outweighed by the greater benefits in emotional wellbeing offered through knit and crochet. However, this study points up the need for a balanced, nuanced understanding of how participants may be affected by using hand craft as a ‘way to wellbeing’.

## 5.6. CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the findings of the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’ study in the light of existing literature and in an awareness of where literature may yet support a more nuanced understanding of the ways subjective perceptions of wellbeing may be affected by amateur women’s making in knit or crochet which is shared to Facebook™.

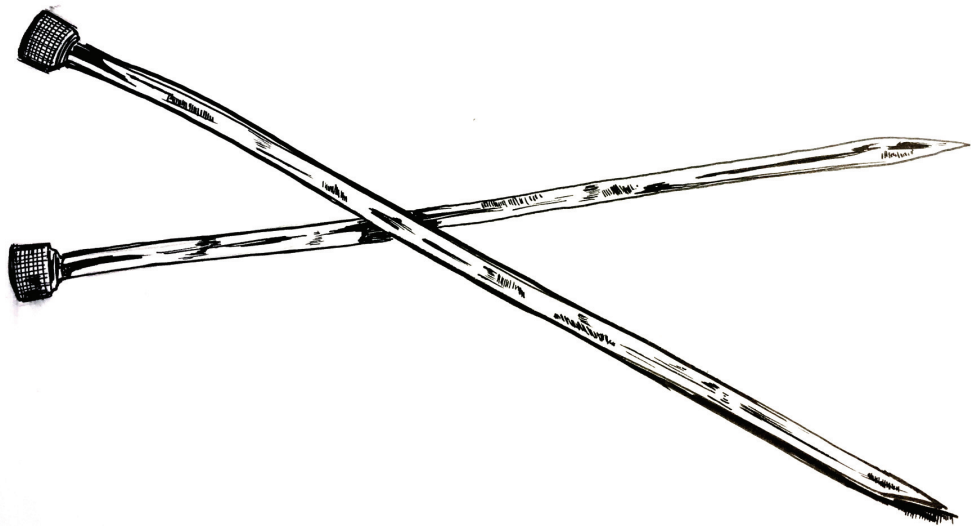
One of the research questions regarded the associations participants constructed between their making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform. The study has highlighted that Facebook™ – and in particular the closed group within Facebook™ – offered participants a safe and supportive space to share their making, its processes, challenges and successes where amateur craftswomen could come together through an understanding of their craft. This built a strong sense of community, which for some



provided significant social connections in the face of physical or emotional isolation. Sharing knit and crochet within this making community is an interesting illustration of how a haptic, tactile craft can be performed and communicated in a digital space, as well as highlighting how making in yarn and sharing through social media are an entangled, embedded part of the creative process.

The primary research question considered the impact on wellbeing that making in knit and crochet had for participants. Responses here confirm existing understanding about the effect that making and sharing hand craft together can influence feelings of connection, 'flow', reflective meditation, crafting moments of self-care, boosting confidence, agency and self-esteem. It is especially the impact that having an opportunity to be creative in an often busy, challenging life which appears to be significantly influential on perceptions of wellbeing, to the extent that this could stand alone as a sixth 'way to wellbeing' for participants.

Through this research, contributions to knowledge have been made in providing an understanding of how participants view the ethics of participation in academic study focused on and located in the digital sphere. It has demonstrated that amateur women makers use Facebook™ to celebrate and articulate their creative work in knit and crochet and that communities built around this connection located in digital space can support positive perceptions of wellbeing. It has reinforced an understanding of how practices in yarn craft can support social connections and calming meditative 'flow' which both enhance feelings of wellbeing but emphasised that a sense of 'benign creativity' in its own right is a highly influential aspect of knit and crochet. Finally, the most significant contribution to knowledge is the claim that engaging in hand crafts such as these can have a negative impact on wellbeing through causing pain, distress and opening space for cycles of negative thinking. This, whilst not contradicting dominant positive messages about hand craft and wellbeing, serves as a reminder that a more nuanced understanding of the impact knit and crochet making may have on wellbeing is necessary.





## 6. CONCLUSIONS

*Bind Off: remove stitches from needle, securing them to avoid unravelling*

The research based on the 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' sought to explore how women amateur makers perceived the impact that engaging in knit and crochet had on their wellbeing as they crafted alone but shared their making on the social media platform, Facebook™. The questions posed were

- What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?
- What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?

This chapter is a reflection on the thesis, where findings will be reviewed and related to the proposed research questions and existing literature. It will clarify the significant outcomes of the work as well as considering its limitations, which together will identify spaces for future research.

### 6.1. A REVIEW

It is helpful to firstly reflect on the shape of the study and clarify the key concepts the research has explored. This section also indicates where this work resonates with or raises questions in the current academic literature.

#### 6.1.1. Review of Literature from Chapter Two

Chapter Two presented an overview of literature which included governmental and third sector reports as well as drawing from academic disciplines including arts in health, digital anthropology, media and communications, psychology and textiles. It reflected on the complex debate surrounding what wellbeing may mean, with a particular focus on Aristotelian eudemonic interpretations of being fulfilled through practical action and supporting friendships (Ryan and Deci, 2001), finding 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992/2002) in activities which are absorbing or in models such



as the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing proffered by the New Economics Foundation (NEF, 2008; Thompson and Aked, 2011). The chapter went on to review approaches in arts in health and especially arts-based making therapies for women experiencing specific physical conditions and mental health challenges (Czamanski-Cohen, 2012; Reynolds et al., 2008). This included the relatively established academic ground of needlecraft and textile making for wellbeing through quilting (Futtermann-Collier, 2011; Grace et al., 2009) in addition to those studies which explicitly examine the role of knit and crochet in wellbeing (Corkhill et al., 2014; Riley et al, 2013).

The chapter moved on to consider other aspects of the thesis title in examining concepts related to being an amateur (Merrifield, 2017) and engaging in amateur craft (Knott, 2015). Such makers – and especially women engaged in the 'soft' hand craft of working with textiles – were seen to be treated with some condescension and denigration (Hutchison and Feist, 1991; Adamson, 2007) but also have a rich history in creativity and protest (Black, 2017; Parker, 1984/2010). The marginalisation of women's hand work in occupations such as knit and crochet was understood to have masked the many complex reasons for its undertaking (Buckley, 1999; Twigger Holroyd, 2017) and devalued its status as a creative and valuable pursuit (Stannard and Sanders, 2015; Turney, 2009).

Finally, the chapter considered how digital places such as Facebook™ had the potential for supporting strong ties in communication and providing a space for rich and collaborative community building. Those studies which focus on the ways social media platforms influenced wellbeing were more likely to suggest negative connotations (Valkenburger et al., 2006), although there are an increasing number which acknowledge a more complex picture contingent on a user's context (Baker and Algorta, 2016). They suggest that positive impacts on wellbeing may be experienced by those who use the digital platform to forge and maintain a social support network (Brusilovskiy et al., 2016). The chapter closed with a consideration of women's political and creative work in digital spaces and that fora such as Ravelry (2018) – and by association, Facebook™ – had the capacity to provide an augmented experience where documenting hand craft in a digital archive has become an embedded part of making practice (Orton Johnson, 2014a).





### 6.1.2. Review of Method from Chapter Three

Chapter Three expanded on the methodology and methods used in the study. The research was rooted in social constructivism, taking a position that participants make meaning based on their subjective experiences and that perceptions of knowledge are personal and situated (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; 2000). Connected to this, data was viewed qualitatively, celebrating the complexity of differing perspectives (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015) and employing an inductive, empathic understanding of participant perceptions gathered in the shared world of the 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group'. Whilst not engaging fully with the theoretical implications of Grounded Theory, some of its approaches were relevant in this study as findings emerged through coding processes over time (Charmaz, 2014) which helped to form an understanding of women amateur knit and crochet makers' views on wellbeing through making.

This positioning, with a deliberate focus on the experiences of women (Mies, 1993) and a commitment to subjective ways of knowing (Welch, 2006) means that the research has been mediated through a feminist lens. Ethnographic approaches were claimed as supportive of this view (Skeggs, 2001) and seen as particularly relevant for a study focused on hand crafted textile work (Hogan and Pink, 2010). It also informed the decision to emphasise personal meaning making rather than attempting to quantify the impact of an activity in which participants were already engaged (Bochner, 2000).

This chapter also unpacked some of the ethical challenges in conducting a study based upon as well as located in a digital setting. The research sought to demonstrate good practice in maintaining a transparent dialogue with participants regarding issues of confidentiality and anonymity in using data from a closed Facebook™ group (British Sociological Association, 2017b; Henderson et al., 2013). Discussions about privacy and iterative permissions for inclusion of images or sensitive narratives meant that informed consent was perceived as an ongoing process and reflections on this form a contribution to knowledge discussed in Chapter Five and below.



### 6.1.3. Review of Findings from Chapter Four

Chapter Four presented data from participants, organized by the thematic coding generated through inductive qualitative analysis. After presenting some of the insights into participants' views on the ethics of engaging in research on Facebook™, group members' perspectives on how they interpret what wellbeing means to them was provided. Building on this contextualisation, the chapter presented text-based data which exemplified participant views and used a selection of images as further illustration of ideas. The data indicated that subjective perceptions of wellbeing included ways that

- sharing engagement in knit and crochet including sharing both hand craft process and product on Facebook™ supported participants' feelings of social connection through a sense of gathering in digital space, sharing a shared interest and feeling connected to other generations from the past, current and imagined future
- making and sharing knit and crochet hand craft with other group members facilitated a strong sense of agency in participants. This had beneficial implications for perceptions of wellbeing as hand craft provided makers with a range of strategies for self-care and a way of communicating care for others, an opportunity to challenge oneself through learning new skills, a conduit for giving and receiving positive strokes of accomplishment and - significantly - in providing freedom to feel creative
- engaging in knit and crochet did not always enhance perceptions of wellbeing. A small but intriguing range of responses from participants revealed that their hand craft and sharing practices could cause physical pain and emotional distress, such as frustration and anxiety, increase feelings of loneliness and isolation and open up space for negative self-talk, doubt and criticism about proficiency, creativity and hoarding behaviours.

An expanded range of data may also be observed in Appendices 10a and 10b.



#### 6.1.4. Review of Discussion from Chapter Five

Chapter Five considered the significance of findings in resonating with existing understanding and in making fresh contributions to knowledge. These included an examination of participant views on taking part in research through a digital setting on Facebook™ and how the affordances of the platform facilitated their engagement (Marres, 2017). It also offered revelations into participant views on the ethics of privacy and protection and how group members were willing to ‘trade’ risks to their confidentiality for the benefits found in making connections with others (Evans, 2013) and building a digital community (Papacharissi, 2011).

Concepts of ‘making’ in a digital space – in knit or crochet to craft an object, to craft a post or comment and to craft an insight into what was important to the individual through an image – were each elements in enhancing subjective perceptions of wellbeing: These included delight in haptic skill, subverting others’ views of what the participant may be capable of, showing care for others and marking oneself as ‘being’ in the world. Augmenting the making process by sharing within the ‘Woolly Wellbeing Research Group’ was identified as a significant embedded practice for recording, documenting or archiving hand craft and attributing greater value and visibility (Orton Johnson, 2014a) to often under-valued work.

There were clear echoes in this study of established ideas about how knit and crochet shared with others can support positive perceptions of wellbeing (Corkhill et al., 2014; Hackney et al., 2016), although the location of the research on Facebook suggested that this could be through forging emotional connections not necessarily related to contact in the physical world. Participant responses indicated that making alone and sharing on Facebook™ enhanced feelings of connection to each other, to members of their family, across generations and within themselves. However, it was creativity in particular which appeared so important to participants: It enhanced perceptions of subjective wellbeing through celebrating the colour and flair of their work or in providing experiences associated with ‘flow’ (Lampitt Adey, 2018) to such a degree that it was suggested it may offer a discrete sixth ‘way’ to wellbeing.

The most revealing aspect of this study was the insight into the capacity for knit, crochet and sharing making on Facebook™ to have a negative impact on wellbeing by



exacerbating or opening up space for physical pain and emotional distress. This challenges the existing dominant argument in arts for health disciplines that creative activities have a widespread positive influence and that troubling factors such as social isolation, mental ill-health and rising health care costs may be eased by their 'prescription' (APPGAHW, 2017a).

## 6.2. REFLECTIONS ON LIMITATIONS IN THE STUDY

Limitations and boundaries to this research were identified in Chapter One but it is timely to revisit them here: The study makes no claim to completeness – there is always more that could be done and, especially in taking a social constructivist stance, other participants engaging at a different time may have indicated different findings.

It is important to acknowledge that the purposive sample range for this work was limiting, inviting women and those who identified as women through a range of Eurocentric and North American blogs and Facebook™ crafting groups, however global their reach. This may have resulted in a narrow range of findings that were broadly similar in nature and did not represent a diversity of experience. Similarly, the location of the 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' on Facebook™ limited participation to those who could access the platform and its affordances present a set structure in how participation could be enacted. Moreover, in only engaging participants in a digital group rather than in physical groups, phenomena such as tone of voice, facial expression and gesture were not aspects which could inform the research.

It is also accepted that all interpretation is situated and influenced by perceptions of the researcher. This study developed out of a personal experience of mental ill health and positive enhancement of subjective wellbeing through knit, crochet and sharing making on Facebook™. Efforts have been made throughout to not conflate the experiences of the participants with that of the researcher or to direct comments through leading questions or narrative, but maintaining critical distance is complex: Emotional investment in the principles behind the study and connection to the participants within it may be seen as both a strength and a weakness.

That all qualitative study is situated was a concept embraced in the research design and communication of outcomes in this thesis. It is therefore impossible to claim that



'gaps' have been 'filled' in knowledge about how engaging in knit or crochet when making alone and sharing in a Facebook™ group could influence perceptions of subjective wellbeing. It is possible, however, to open up space for questions about existing understanding in the Academy and in identifying possibilities for further work. These areas are the focus for the remainder of this chapter.

### 6.3. KEY CONTRIBUTIONS

Whilst some studies have referred to the potential for knit and crochet shared in digital groups to support subjective perceptions of wellbeing (Hackney, et al, 2016; Shercliff, 2015), no other works have explored hand craft groups on Facebook™ as a specific location where this may be experienced. This innovation has had other impacts, in investigating Facebook™ use by more mature women (Miller et al., 2016) and in involving participants in dialogue about the ethics of conducting research in digital space as part of an ongoing process of consent.

This research has reinforced existing understanding of the beneficial effects that knit, crochet and sharing making on Facebook™ may have on subjective perceptions of wellbeing in feeling connected, productive, feeling a greater sense of self-esteem (Corkhill et al., 2014) and particularly in the opportunity to be creative (Lampitt Adey, 2018). However, the study is unusual in reporting that some participants experienced negative effects on their wellbeing in engaging with these activities. Both of these aspects contribute to knowledge through using qualitative research methods as a way of moving towards a broader and deeper understanding of wellbeing (AHRC, 2017) .

#### 6.3.1. Unforeseen Contributions: Understanding the ethics of participatory research located in digital space

Through this research, amateur women makers used Facebook™ to celebrate and articulate their creative work in knit and crochet and strongly conveyed that communities built around this connection located in digital space can support positive perceptions of wellbeing. However, an unexpected finding in this study was the resulting insight into participant views on engaging in research through such digital means, especially in their opinions on the ethics of participating through a platform



where anonymity could not be guaranteed. Involving group members in discussions about consent, the challenges to traditional ethical questions of anonymity and the importance of identifying what they believed to be important in protecting their interests (Beninger et al., 2014; Fiesler and Proferes, 2018) was an important commitment to a transparent, situated and dialogic approach in caring for participants (Henderson et al., 2013).

Contributions to knowledge have therefore been made in providing an understanding of how participants view the ethics of participation in an academic study focused on and located in the digital sphere: Participants were aware of risks to their privacy through engaging with others on Facebook™ – both for the research project and in their everyday use. There was a broad acceptance that anything posted may not be private, regardless of group or personal timeline settings, and so members posted only those comments which they were content to be heard. Some instead used the opportunity of the study to express thoughts they would not usually share with close friends or family. Part of members' decisions to post was based on trust in the group administration and management and convenience in being able to respond at a pace to suit participants. Some were drawn by the openness of questions which invited reflection about making - wanting to make their voices heard - whilst others felt excited by the facility to communicate with other makers around the world because they were connected by interest in knit and crochet. Overall, participants felt that these benefits were worth balancing the risk to privacy.

For many members, it was precisely *because* the research was located on Facebook that facilitated their engagement and the emphasis on being informed about the ethical quandaries around the research helped to strengthen collaboration and connection with participants (Mayne, 2016b). This aspect of the study responds to a call from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Armstrong et al., 2014) to explore the ethical questions and ways of knowing in research using digital networks. The approach in this study has also been identified as an important contribution in developing ethical research practices by Gregory (2017) as it makes clear the agency that participants possess in the research process.



### 6.3.2. Contributions Responding to the Question: ‘What impact on wellbeing does making in knit and crochet have for participants?’

The study has reinforced existing understanding on the ways that social connection (Riley et al., 2013), finding an activity which supports meditative ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992/2002; Shercliff, 2015), giving in its different forms (Hackney et al., 2016), and particularly creativity (Lampitt Adey, 2018) can enhance perceptions of wellbeing for amateur makers.

However, it has also indicated a far more complex connection between making in knit or crochet and its capacity to enhance subjective perceptions of wellbeing than previous work on the ways stitching can benefit makers (Corkhill et al., 2015; Pöllänen and Voutilainen, 2017). Participants have shared that yarn craft can contribute to and even create pain, distress, loneliness, self-denigration and destructive cycles of self-talk. These findings do not necessarily outweigh their more positive counterparts, but rather emphasise the need for a more nuanced understanding of the impact that knit and crochet may have on individuals. These outcomes help to address concerns about the lack of research on the negative effect of some arts in wellbeing practices (Daykin, 2017). It is also a response to the recent call from the cross disciplinary research councils (Research Councils UK, 2017) for study which examines the “unintended consequences of interventions” (p.7) designed to enhance mental health wellbeing, especially where arts participation is proffered as a ‘cure’ for challenges in physical health or issues rooted in social inequalities (Oman and Taylor, 2018).

#### *6.3.2.1. Understanding connections between knit, crochet and supporting subjective perceptions of wellbeing*

Felski (2000) proffers the reminder that the ‘everyday’ is not a neutral term and that the ways that it has been entangled with women’s work of various kinds has rendered it problematic. In particular, she emphasises that women are not ‘victims’ of the everyday and that occupations such as hand crafts which might be considered invisible and insignificant have much more significance to those involved in them. This research has presented women’s amateur making in knit and crochet as an example of how





everyday creativity (Amabile, 2017) can be powerful in enhancing subjective perceptions of wellbeing.

The primary research question considered the impact on wellbeing that making in knit and crochet had for participants. Responses here confirm existing understanding about the effect that making and sharing hand craft together can influence feelings of connection (Myzelev, 2009), 'flow' (Lampitt Adey, 2018), reflective meditation (Corkhill et al., 2014), crafting moments of self-care, boosting confidence, agency and self-esteem (Pöllänen and Voutilainen, 2017). It is especially the impact that having an opportunity to be creative in an often busy, challenging life which appears to be significantly influential on perceptions of wellbeing, to the extent that this could stand alone as a discrete 'way to wellbeing' (Hoot Creative Arts, 2016) for participants.

Knit and crochet making has been shown in this study to have strong, positive connections to wellbeing, though enhancing social connection to exchange memories, reduce isolation and gain advice; it can open a space for creative expression, which may also increase feelings of confidence, mastery, empowerment and autonomy; soothing and reflective meditations through the rhythmic stitch of making can support mindfulness or serve as a coping mechanism at times of strain; it can provide calm and a helpful metaphor for learning how to 'be' in the world, where "it can be simultaneously original and part of a long tradition. If something goes wrong, or is not working out as planned, knitting is quite easy to unravel and start again" (Fisk, 2012, p. 162). These ideas have echoes of the spiritual, that "making fits within a wider understanding of who we are and where we are going" (Langlands, 2017, p. 22) and that crafting by hand satisfies a basic human need to create and make - "we need it, it's good for our health and it makes us 'better'" (p. 342).

#### *6.3.2.2. Understanding links between knit, crochet and negative implications for wellbeing*

However, the most intriguing outcome of this research has been to highlight that knit and crochet is not a 'one size fits all' panacea and it would be troubling to assume its accepted potency to enhance wellbeing as being implication free. Whilst many participants in this project have found subjective perceptions of wellbeing are



supported by soothing or distracting from loneliness, ongoing mental health challenges, physical pain and emotional distress, others have indicated that hand crafting may bring these issues to the fore.

There is a lack of attention to the negative implications of creative activity on wellbeing in the Academy. This may be related to a dominant ideology that engagement with arts and craft can enhance positive perceptions of wellbeing which mean that wider problems such as social isolation or increasing demand for mental health support can be provided within the community rather than through institutional or structural changes (Oman and Taylor, 2018). Outcomes for reports considering the benefits of using creative arts activities including hand crafts are frequently phrased in economic terms and celebrate the potential savings in healthcare costs or strains on the National Health Service.

The problematic narrative here is exemplified by the illustrations for the APPGAHW (2017a) report 'Creative Health: The arts for health and wellbeing': Throughout the main report (2017a), on the APPGAHW website (2018) and serving as covers for the short version of the report (APPGAHW, 2017b) the simple line drawings portray a human figure, head tilted back to receive medication from a bottle labelled 'Culture'; a mannequin, with its severed head being reattached by tube of 'glue' labelled 'The Arts'; a teapot ready to pour 'Arts' into a teacup bearing the sign 'Lost Soul'. Reading these images suggests a straightforward relationship between creative activities and improvements for wellbeing, or even that such activities may 'fix' the problems which have resulted in people feeling broken. Outcomes from this research raise questions about this narrative and are useful in challenging the arts in health community to be open to an expanded view of how wellbeing may be threatened as well as enhanced by activities like knit and crochet (Daykin, 2017).



### 6.3.3. Contributions Responding to the Question: ‘What associations do participants construct between such making, their understanding of wellbeing and articulating the process through Facebook™ as a social media platform?’

Meikle (2016) describes how media users can employ the affordances of digital platforms to “make things, can share the things they and others have said and made – can make all of this saying, making and sharing visible to others” (p.x). The author uses this as part of a warning – that the digital world can be perceived as threatening and that there are risks inherent in sharing so transparently within it. However, social networks, whether concentrated on social media or in the physical world, are crucial in sustaining amateur hand craft creative practices, where they are a means to connect and shape subjectivities such as wellbeing. Likewise, if creativity is perceived as a placed practice, it is important to investigate what making and wellbeing means to individual participants who are working with yarn and communicating their creativity on Facebook™ – a location perhaps more associated with surveillance or the banal (Hawkins, 2017). In this research, group members have adopted and adapted (Baym, 2015) the affordances of the Facebook™ platform to make connections with other amateurs and share their making together with bodies curved inwards over a screen much in the same way as they may share making in a physical group (Shercliff, 2015).

Before the advent of social media technologies, Betty Friedan (1983/2010) wrote about how, “to overcome patterns of urban and domestic space that isolated women and made their domestic work invisible, the material feminists developed new forms of neighbourhood organisation” (p.288) such as communal kitchens or gardening spaces. In a similar vein, participants in this study demonstrated how they could appropriate the social media network to hone their focus on making, connect with other amateurs and share both the process and product of their creativity. In this way, the affordances of the digital platform, in posting images, asking questions, commenting on and praising the work of others, has allowed yarn crafters to shift their making in knit and crochet alone into a shared activity – a “collective act performed in the privacy of one’s home, but also of a ‘private’ sociability, where activity fuels friendship” (Turney, 2009, p.152).



Haptic experiences of making in knit and crochet and turning to the immaterial nature of social media to express them are perhaps not obviously connected. However, participants in this study had embedded the way they thought about and communicated their making through its digital articulation in sharing via Facebook™. Gschwandtner (2010) described this complex relationship where,

“in reaction to the speed and disembodiment of internet connectivity, people turn to hand craft for slowness, corporeality and tactility. Then they turn back to the internet to reconnect. We’re navigating a circular route from material to immaterial, using string or yarn to test what’s within our reach” (Gschwandtner, 2010, p.25)

This description effectively identifies the different ways that enhancing perceptions of wellbeing appears to be associated with amateur knit and crochet practice in digital space: It supports social connection in ways that would be impossible in the physical world, enabling geographical or emotional isolation or the need for sociality at ‘unsociable’ hours to fall away as barriers. It also supports expressions of and reflections on personal creativity, where documenting haptic making in digital space can preserve the fragility of an artefact that, with one pull of the yarn, could disappear: It is a way of fixing the product and the maker at a moment in time and can serve as a visible archive of what has been crafted. In this way, the digital platform holds the potential to enhance ways that the amateur maker is being or becoming.

#### 6.4. IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

Outcomes from this research highlight the potential for further work, exploring some questions that have opened up because of the particular location and findings of the study and others which are rooted in its gaps or limitations.

Firstly, Lampitt Adey (2018) has already identified this research as a helpful beginning in broadening understanding of everyday creativity in amateur makers. Further work with knit and crochet makers, as well as exploring perspectives of other amateur hand crafters, could be valuable in exploring the significance of everyday creativity in enhancing perceptions of subjective wellbeing. It would be interesting to engage with participants to explore the extent to which connection through making alone or in a



physical group setting rather than a digital platform can corroborate or challenge these findings. This responds particularly to Amabile's (2017) suggestion for new work which studies the creativity of amateur, everyday makers "*in situ* – as it is happening" (p.5). Elements of this may also further focus on the affective nature of textiles and yarn, considering how the tactility of yarn and fibre impacts on emotional wellbeing (Dolan and Holloway, 2016). Some of this work has already been undertaken in a journal writing and making project with 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' participants which was designed to explore in-depth reflections on wellbeing through knit and crochet over time but that were shared in a physical rather than digital form. This was an aspect of research not included in this thesis because of its methodological differences but can be observed in Mayne (2017) and is to be expanded further in a forthcoming article in the *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice*.

It is important to expand the study and investigate further the negative impact that amateur knit and crochet making may have on perceptions of wellbeing. This could be significant in developing a more nuanced understanding of how policy decisions which support social prescribing could impact on service users and has been highlighted as a shortcoming of current arts in health research (Daykin, 2017). It also could help to expand research into the range or modes of participation in arts activities designed for or assumed to benefit wellbeing. This specific question has been raised recently by Oman and Taylor (2018), who have included reference to making in textile hand craft as an under-researched aspect of arts participation.

Finally, the articulation of amateur knit and crochet making on digital platforms may be expanded further to investigate how the affordances of different fora facilitate different kinds of sharing. One example of this could be achieved through developing the analysis of images shared in this research on Facebook™ and in exploring the motivations for sharing photographs on Instagram™ – a medium far more associated with the visual (Instagram, 2018). This work is currently under way in a collaborative project between the researcher and the sociologist Kate Orton Johnson.



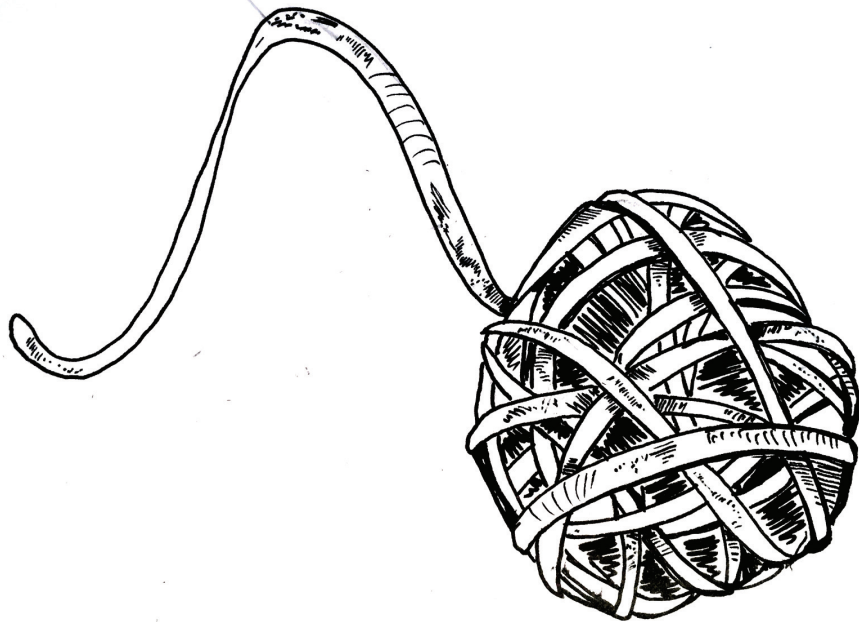
## 6.5. THREADING A WAY BACK TO THE START

This thesis began with a quotation from Elizabeth Zimmerman (1971/1995) on the beneficial effects of knitting for those who were troubled - or indeed those who were not. It has presented participants' views on the different ways that making with yarn has enhanced their perceptions of positive wellbeing through connecting with others, using their craft for meditation, reflection and self-care, expressing love and quiet social activism in making for others and in the experience of working with a tactile, soothing fibre. Importantly, it has also challenged perceptions about a darker side to the impact hand craft may have for some participants in causing or exacerbating pain or contributing to emotional distress. This has raised the concern that statements about the wellbeing benefits through knit and crochet should be more nuanced.

Experiences of making – the celebratory, the soulful, the confessional, the distraught - were shared in all their complexity on the social media platform used for this study. The digital articulation of participants' creativity was an illustration of how women could use Facebook™ as a place to reflect on and enhance the wellbeing impact knit and crochet had for them. Regardless of its flaws, this digital space was appropriated by participants for their own use, in connecting with other yarn crafters to share personal narratives of making and becoming:

we are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative  
space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity; which gives us a new  
location from which to articulate our sense of the world

(hooks, 1991, p.153)







WORD COUNT: 66,057



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## APPENDIX 1a

### GLOSSARY I: Social Media Terms

Blog	A portmanteau of 'web-log': personal or business site with content based on regular articles, think pieces or video; may also be used as a verb 'to blog'
Blogger	An individual who maintains a blog
Bump	To comment on a thread in order to bring the post to the top of the group timeline
Chat	One-to-one communication using a 'back-channel' route, such as personal, direct or instant messaging
Closed group	A group where posts and comments may only be observed by those within it, rather than being seen on personal timelines. Members of a closed group may 'join' it, rather than becoming 'friends' (see below) with others
Comment	A response reacting to another's post
Facebook™	Social media platform founded in 2004, designed to connect people and share content
Flaming	Disruptive, controversial or harmful content designed to cause distress (see also 'Trolling'); term used more in US settings
Friend	An individual with whom a personal connection is made on Facebook: Unlike a one-sided 'following' of an organisation or business, social media friendship is bi-lateral as both parties need to agree to it; after this, friends may see each other's personal timeline
Instagram™	Social media network founded on 2010 and now owned by Facebook, designed to share photographs; posts can also be shared across other social networks
Like	An action through clicking an icon below a post or comment to quickly indicate a response e.g. a 'thumbs up' for like, 'heart' for love; laughter, distress and anger are also possible reactions



Lurker	A member of a group who may read discussions but who does not directly interact through 'liking', commenting or posting
Platform	Web 2.0 (see below) technology which supports social media content sharing across different sites and of different types, eg text, still and moving image
Post	A social media platform 'update', where an individual provides content; this may stand alone or develop into a thread (see below)
Secret group	Similar to a closed group, but with added security measures so that the group cannot be found through searching and invitations to join the group are not made on personal timelines
Social Media System	Similar to 'Social Network Site' (below) but enhanced by additional applications which allow generation and / or sharing of other web-based content
Social Network Site	An online platform used to connect people and help build social relations through creating a profile – often based on employment or topics of personal interest
Thread	A series of comments or replies to a post, which may form a conversation between individuals or be a series of communications from the original poster
Timeline	Feed of posts on a personal account, which may comprise of public posts, sponsored content, posts from 'friends' and groups to which the individual belongs
Trolling	Disruptive, controversial or harmful content designed to cause distress; also 'troll' is the person creating the content (see also 'Flaming')
Twitter™	Social media network founded in 2006, designed to allow users to share short updates as well as images and links to other web content
Web 2.0	Progression of early, static affordances of the World Wide Web, to support collaboration and dynamic sharing of content generated by users



## APPENDIX 1b

### GLOSSARY II: Knit and Crochet Terms

CAL	Crochet-Along: a group activity where participants make the same design in an agreed time frame. This may be using a complete pattern or one which is released in instalments
Crojo	Shortening of 'crochet mojo' (see below): A motivation to make, or belief in one's ability to make in crochet
DPNS	Double Pointed Needles: used in groups of four or five to knit fabric in the round
Entrelac	Specific knitting or crochet technique which creates an interwoven, textured pattern of diamonds or squares, with stitches oriented in different directions
Frog	To undo or take back knit or crochet where there has been a mistake – also called 'ripping out' as 'rip it, rip it' creates the connection to 'frog'. (See also 'Tink')
Gauge	Measurement for tension in constructed yarn fabric, e.g. to create accurate sizing in garments: Dimensions are calculated by number and height of stitches per row e.g. 18 stitches and 24 rows in a 4 inch or 10 cm square
Hook	Vernacular term for crochet, which uses a hook rather than needles.
Hooker	Vernacular term for crochet makers, often used informally and humorously
Hot off the hook (or needles)	Vernacular phrase for a knit or crochet item which has just been finished
KAL	Knit-Along: a group activity where participants make the same design in an agreed time frame. This may be using a complete pattern or one which is released in instalments
Mojo	A motivation to make, or belief in one's ability to make – playing on original etymology related to charm or spell



NCR / NKR	'Off-topic' posts and comments on a group page which are 'not crochet related' or 'not knitting related'
Noro	A specific brand of luxury yarn from Japan
Ravelry	A community social network forum operating since 2007, where yarn-crafters can source patterns, post completed projects, find information about yarn and join specialist groups led by area, interest, designers, bloggers etc. <a href="http://www.ravelry.com">www.ravelry.com</a> has over seven million members. (Also referred to as 'Rav')
Self-striping	A specialised form of yarn – e.g. for socks – which is dyed to create distinct stripes of colour if knit or crochet to a specific gauge
Stash	Vernacular term for collected or stored yarn, not yet made into a finished item
Subbed	Shortened term for 'substituted', where a different yarn than one suggested in a pattern has been chosen
Tension	Another term for 'gauge' above, a measure of dimensions in knit or crochet fabric
Tink	To undo or take back knitting where there has been a mistake – i.e., to 'knit' backwards. (See also 'Frog')
Tunisian	Specific crochet technique originating in the Mediterranean – this uses a specific crochet hook which is longer than usual, possibly extended with a flexible cable
Twiddlemuff	A tube or lap mat constructed with different weights and textures of yarn and decorated with items to occupy the hands – a popular charity project as the items are used for people with Dementias or and Autism diagnoses
WIP	Shortened term for 'work-in-progress': an unfinished knit or crochet object
Yarn	Spun textile thread in variety of weights or thicknesses (cobweb, lace, 4-ply or fingering, double-knit, aran or worsted, chunky or bulky) made from any source material from acrylic to alpaca or bamboo. Only yarn from sheep is called 'wool'





Yarn-bomb	Vernacular term for the large-scale decoration of public space using knit or crochet items: This may be for socially activist or celebratory purposes
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## APPENDIX 2

### PARTICIPATION CALL

A call for participation was published in a range of blogs and Facebook™ pages, with the support of interested community arts groups, writers, designers, magazines and yarn manufacturers, including:

Attic 24, Charnwood Arts, Cre8tion Crochet, Crochet in Paternoster, Crochet UK, Designer Yarns, Devon Sun Yarns, Fiber Flux, Haphazard Hookers, Hooking Marvellous, I love Crochet and Knit, Janie Crow, Knit Today, KnitPro, Knitters and Natters UK, Knitting Pretty, Mollie Makes, Moogly, Northbound Knitting, Not So Granny, Not Your Average Crochet, Petals to Picots, Rowan Yarns, Simply Crochet, Simply Knitting, Sirdar, Stylecraft Yarns, Super Crochet Girl, The Crochet Crowd, The Wool Baa, Winwick Mum Sockalong, Woolly Wotnots, Yarn Stories, Yarn Addict by Anniken Allis

The text used was:

"Would you like to participate in the Woolly Wellbeing Research project?

This would contribute to a PhD study into the ways women share their knit and crochet online. Do you post to ask for advice or to show images of what you have made? Does it help you manage feeling lonely or to connect with other crafter-friends? Lots of these questions will be the topic of posts as we share together.

To take part, you'll need to read the Participant Information document in 'Files' and then complete a consent form on the pinned post at the top of the page, just so I know you are informed about the project and how your posts could be used. This is a closed group and all posts are confidential between group members. All material will be made anonymous in writing up research.

Just search for 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Group' or click to connect: [\[LINK\]](#)

Feel free to share!"



## APPENDIX 3

### WOOLLY WELLBEING RESEARCH GROUP RESEARCH QUESTIONS

DATE	TEXT
05/02/2015 11:50	And we're off! First up, I'd love you to share some pictures of you making your WIPs... you know, the ones where it's evening and there is a fur baby, actual baby or sneaky glass of wine at your side! These could be images you've posted before, or things you are making now. If you could comment on why you posted it (feeling proud, feeling lonely, feeling in need of advice?) that would be really interesting. Thanks for taking part, Alison
14/02/2015 09:06	Happy Valentine's! A question... why do we make for those we love?
18/02/2015 08:43	Okay ladies - research topic number one is about feeling lonely or feeling connected with crafting online (This is any knit or crochet group in general - no names needed) How connected do you feel to other people in a crafty community on Facebook? Why do you join or post? What do you feel you gain from it? Do you ever post because you feel lonely? (This could be physically alone, or feeling alone with others around) Do you post images of yourself working on WIPS alone at night - and why? Does anyone want to shout out for 'making alone - yay!' - what is good about making on our own as opposed to in a group (real or online)? It would be really fascinating to have your comments below - and post images (new or ones you have put on other sites before) if you wish. Remember, you only have to engage with the questions you find interesting or appropriate - there's no pressure or time limit. Thanks, Alison
25/02/2015 10:45	Right! It's Wednesday research question time... Our next research topic is 'STASH' A few things to think about here, e.g. Care to share images of your 'stash' (new or ones you have shared in the past)? Why do you think we share pictures of our yarn like this? Have you ever shared strategies for hiding / smuggling in yarn to your stash with other crafters - and do you feel like adding them here? My sister (no names, no pack drill) MIGHT keep hers in the car boot until her husband is out... Why do we have this attitude to our yarn? How do you feel about the use of the word 'stash'? Marybeth Stalp is an academic writing mostly about the US quilting tradition. She has suggested that women feel the next to carve out a space (literally - an area in the home as well as 'headspace') to indulge in leisure activities which their families may feel draw them away from their 'caring duties' - but that they feel guilty about doing so. What are your thoughts on this? All responses welcome and thanks for your time



DATE	TEXT
04/03/2015 09:03	<p>Happy Wednesday everybody - are you ready for our next Woolly Wellbeing Research topic? Quite a few people have posted recently mentioning the way that knit or crochet makes you feel close to a family member - either because that person taught you or you remember them crafting when you were small... Do you knit / crochet because it makes you feel connected to an older generation - A particular figure from your family or childhood? Who taught you to knit / crochet? Do you feel part of an historic tradition, going back through the generations? Is it on a smaller scale, where crafting makes you feel closer to a family member? Or doesn't that apply at all - are you the only member of your family involved in yarn craft? Did you teach yourself - from books or YouTube? I have a 'reverse' generation crafting story as I didn't learn a craft at home or in my childhood (my mum did knit, although it always seemed a fierce battle) but my lovely daughter taught me to crochet in adulthood... As always, your comments and images, should you wish to share them, are appreciated.</p>
11/03/2015 10:34	<p>Hi everyone, Happy Wednesday... my question for you this week is slightly different and not 'yarn-related', but 'research-related'... I am preparing a presentation for a university conference about the way I am doing the first part of this research on Facebook. I am not using Twitter or Pinterest for research as it is public-access and I wanted to ensure I had people's permission to use their comments or images. Facebook itself got into enormous trouble last year, using (and influencing) people's pages to do a psychology experiment about emotion. I hope I have explained to you all that I want you to be fully informed about this page as research I want to be ethical in letting you know that - although this is a closed group - people within the group see your posts and know your FB names etc... you are not anonymous on the page (but you will be in any writing I do). I wondered - what do you feel about using Facebook to gather your opinions like this? Do you see benefits and / or disadvantages? Do you have concerns about people knowing your views &amp; seeing your images, or is it a positive or helpful thing to be engaged with? You have, of course, as much right to be clearly associated with your comments as you do to be anonymous... I wonder if that is especially important if, for any number of reasons, you don't feel your voice gets heard. Sorry for the ramble... it's just something I am interested in thinking about further and - as always - I'd really appreciate your views (Remember, on the subject of being ethical, it's important that I have your details - this is especially important for those people who may like to engage in some more individual interviews)</p>



DATE	TEXT
18/03/2015 09:20	<p>Happy Wednesday everybody! I have been thinking about putting this week's topic out there for a little while... A number of people have shared some really amazing, motivating and touching personal stories about how knit or crochet has had an impact on their wellbeing. If you would like to, it would be fantastic to have more of these, but I am aware this is often quite sensitive and personal. So - if you are happy to share on the page, feel free - if you would still like to share this, but more anonymously than the page allows, you could send it to me via a Facebook message - if you'd rather not write about this at all, that's fine - just enjoy the camaraderie of the group! Comments of course may highlight if knit or crochet has had a negative effect on your wellbeing, not just positive. My intention would be to use these - anonymised or using first names only - as sections running through each chapter of my thesis and possibly for a book (eeek!) on Textiles and Wellbeing. If the book plans come off, I would contact you again to make sure it was still ok to use your comments, but if you want to share with the group but not have it used in a publication, just make that clear in your post. Thanks for your interest, ladies - Wednesday questions aside, this has become such a warm and supportive community.</p>
02/04/2015 09:37	<p>And we're back on track - a Thursday Research Question doesn't have the same alliterative satisfaction, but we'll go for it anyway! My topic for you this week is how you feel about 'the unfinished'... We all have a selection of UFOs (unfinished objects) - some we'll come round to in different seasons, some have birthdays, some are 'vintage'. My MiL has an unfinished sweater in bright yellow, for my husband to do his O level exams in... It was the early 80s. If it ever gets finished, it is unlikely to fit! Are UFOs a source of anxiety, guilt of frustration? Are they just 'marinating', waiting for the right time? Is it just part of your creative process? Is it sometimes 'right' to not finish something? Do you keep some UFOs out of nostalgia? Do you have a discipline to undo and repurpose your UFOs? I'd love to know what you think! Comments appreciated as always - and remember, do message me if there is a question / topic you'd like the group to explore. Alison</p>
08/04/2015 09:15	<p>Hey ladies, are you ready for this week's question? Thanks to a member for suggesting this topic. Where do you like to knit or crochet? A few of you have already posted pictures of your favourite spot. Do you (and how do you feel about) crafting in public? Pub, park, bus... Some people are proud and others feel awkward or embarrassed. All comments and pictures appreciated. On another note, my lovely hubs has created some amazing word clouds of comments from some of our questions, which I'll share with you tomorrow... look out for them!</p>



DATE	TEXT
15/04/2015 06:25	<p>Good morning, ladies. Are you up for another research topic? Quite a few people have already posted about this idea... I am interested in how many of you use knit or crochet for managing pain. There's quite a bit of research around to do with this, e.g. from a charity here in the UK called Stitchlinks ( <a href="http://www.stitchlinks.com">http://www.stitchlinks.com</a> ). Some feel it helps guard against / keep our minds off physical pain (people on here have mentioned fibromyalgia, migraine etc) and I know lots use it to help with managing emotional or psychological pain - I certainly got into crochet because it helped anxiety and panic attacks. Then again, I know knit and crochet can 'be' a pain, with carpal tunnel, arthritis, and hand / back /shoulders issues, which can be really frustrating for crafters. What to you think and does it work for you ... how does it help you manage pain... or don't you find it works for you? All comments appreciated as always. By the way, thanks for a great thread on where you knit or crochet last week... and it's still going! Always feel free to go back to posts that interest you and add comments. Remember you can also message me if you have an idea for a topic you'd like to discuss.</p>
22/04/2015 09:00	<p>Morning ladies - it is Wednesday research topic time! How of you you see your making as 'social activism' (some call it 'craftivism'? This could be using knit or crochet to improve your environment through yarn-bombing, where an area is unexpectedly decorated with lots of woolly goodness (for an event, like [NAME]'s Tour de Yorkshire or just because), for making items for charity - either which is sent directly to them or used for a big statement, or for social / political reasons (like Wool against Weapons). For some, this may be very private, sending hats or blankets quietly off to charity - or a very public thing, perhaps with a group. The images are from a yarn-bombing in Saltburn, UK to celebrate the 2012 Olympics. I'd love to know whether you engage with this, how you feel about it and to see images if you'd like to share. One word of caution, though... In other sites, there have been some very unpleasant episodes where people have complained about yarn-bombing. I wouldn't want any negativity here, so if you disagree with the concept, this just isn't the question for you this week. I wouldn't want people who do get involved in craftivism / social action through yarn to feel 'got at' here on this research page.... hope that's ok to say. Thanks for all your responses so far - your comments are always appreciated. Remember, feel free to suggest another topic you think should be discussed... just PM me.</p>
29/04/2015 08:35	<p>Hi everyone, happy Wednesday. I had a lovely day presenting at Sheffield Hallam university yesterday and I'm sitting having a coffee before doing a short presentation at Birmingham City university today! Are you ready for today's question... A very open one this week, following on from an audience question yesterday. They asked - What does what you make say about you... your personality or identity? Really looking forward to seeing what you think of this Alison</p>
06/05/2015 07:54	<p>Happy Wednesday, everybody. I hope you have had a good week. In the UK it has been a bank holiday for the beginning of May and therefore we have been battling rain and gales! Your question for this week is quite a broad one about the social media you use to share your yarny making - I'm interested in what other (if any) social media you write about / post pictures of your work, and why you use them for that , as well as why you use Facebook groups (not just this one, but any you are a part of)... What is it that a Facebook group gives you that helps you share your WIPs (and are there drawbacks?) Interested as always to hear your thoughts Alison</p>



DATE	TEXT
13/05/2015 09:41	<p>Happy Wednesday everybody! An aspect of my research which will dominate the next year is exploring how women share making and thinking in 'physical' knit and crochet groups - and how that may be similar / different to online groups. My question for you this week is one that can sometimes be challenging in crafting FB groups - off crafty topic chat. This can be helpful and touching - and can also cause difficulties and group meltdown. How do you feel about what we tend to introduce as "Not knitting / crochet related..." posts? Why do you think people post NKR / NCR topics, whether they are sharing family or personal news, or perhaps having a vent about something? What links do you see (if any) with this and conversations which may happen in a physical crafty group? How do people respond well (or not well, but please no identifiable details / potentially 'flaming' responses if you decide to consider this bit) One of the things that has been so delightful in this group is seeing how sensitive and supportive members are, so I thank you in advance for using those qualities if you choose to reply to this one...</p>
03/06/2015 08:25	<p>Bumping this question from last summer - any new thoughts welcome Morning, ladies. Waiting for a delayed train, so please forgive any fumbling fingers on the keypad! Quite an open question this week, about sharing patterns. I don't mean sharing 'paid for' patterns, as I am sure you respect independent designers' work, but that friendly, here's that hard to find free gem on revelry, or the little something you developed yourself... Why do you think we share patterns in this way? Research into Victorian and early 20th century sewing suggested it was a way for women to make connections and friendship. Is sharing / asking for help with finding or completing patterns through Facebook the same or different from sharing with people in a physical group? I'd love to hear your thoughts on this...</p>
17/06/2015 09:03	<p>Good morning and hello to a flurry of new members! (thanks [NAME], I imagine :-)) I am bumping this question from June for anyone who would like to contribute their views. Thank you [NAME] Morning all - happy Wednesday! I hope you are settled in for another research question. Thanks for last week, where I shared previous questions for new members - and do please feel free to go back at any time to add comments to things we have already started to discuss. (One way is to type my name into the search bar on the page - you'll get all sorts of other random things, but the research questions too!) This week, I have a question based on a conversation with a lady at a workshop a few weeks ago. She was explaining how, when she comes home (and especially after a rubbish day), she reaches for her yarn in order to be comforted by and lose herself in colour. She was making the most beautiful blanket from tiny squares of vibrant yarn. I thought this was interesting, as I have read about quite a few people who focus on colour - making striped blankets over a year, where the shades reflect their mood (although these are not always colourful, showing the ups and downs of a year). Do you use colour to comfort you and enable you to forget a rubbish day? Someone else close to me finds it very difficult to choose - even use - bright colours when she is feeling low. Is there anything else about making with yarn which soothes you at difficult times - the soft squish, using something natural rather than electronic, or just working working with your hands - being creative? I'd love to know your thoughts - all responses appreciated as always.</p>





DATE	TEXT
08/07/2015 06:37	Bumping this question from July... all new contributions welcome! Morning, early bird Woolly Wellbeing Ones! I hope this Wednesday finds you in good spirits... this week's research question draws again on some of the ideas from our earliest topic which I am trying to untangle - what do you feel you gain from a Facebook yarny group which you don't get elsewhere? What is it about this type of social media (as opposed to another, like Instagram or Twitter) which makes you feel like sharing your work, ideas and questions... and are there things which negatively affect sharing your creativity on Facebook other than trolling? In appreciation of your thoughts, as always Alison
16/07/2015 16:59	So, just a quick question, after holding a 'yarn lounge retreat' in a busy conference... People were invited to come and relax, craft or perhaps learn to crochet. We hardly got anything done, but had great chats about woolly wellbeing! Why is that? How do you think holding some yarn and hook / needles (even if we don't actually do anything with them!) helps us to have such deep conversations?
29/07/2015 11:12	Inspired by [NAMES] post about donating socks from the Sockalong groups (More here if you've missed it: <a href="http://winwickmum.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/yarndale-sock-line.html">http://winwickmum.blogspot.co.uk/2015/07/yarndale-sock-line.html</a> ) I wanted to ask this week about knit, crochet and feeling you are 'making a contribution to society' - This is often part of a definition of wellbeing, but I think it often gets tangled up with work / finances. How does knit / crochet make you feel you are contributing / helping / supporting? This could be crafting for charity, giving in your own circle of friends and family or supporting a local independent retailer... and feel free to add your own interpretations of what this might mean. All responses appreciated, as always Alison
05/08/2015 09:44	Hey ladies, good morning... A question today is triggered by some things I have been reading (I'm not sure of the answer for myself, so feel free to ruminate out loud!) Some writers say women knit / crochet out of nostalgia, for a slower pace of life before the world got so busy and demanding Some writers say women know 'the way it was back then' was tough and nothing to be nostalgic about, but knit and crochet to be part of a heritage / tradition of hard-working women Some writers say women knit/ crochet as a rebellion against how people expect them to be - deliberately doing something against expectations What do you think? Alison



DATE	TEXT
02/09/2015 09:34	<p>Happy Wednesday everyone... I am back from the In the Loop 4 conference in Glasgow - this was a BRAVE thing - it's been over 10 years since I was away from home but not staying with family and some of that time involved not leaving the house at all! I gave my paper on Thursday, explaining about the research into wellbeing and this Facebook group project - thank you for letting me share your comments or views and images of the things you have made. It was the first time that I had spoken with 'my people' - i.e. yarny types, rather than a general audience of PhD students or designers. As I spoke, I felt an emotional reaction in the room - people were moved to a few tears and laughter too - they understood what knit and crochet meant to you chaps. There was a real interest in how we are using Facebook groups to share our making. I also met some amazing people -some I already follow through blogging and some new to me. There are a few links below for some more detailed reflections on the conference: <a href="http://www.kariebookish.net/?p=10778">http://www.kariebookish.net/?p=10778</a> <a href="http://katedaviesdesigns.com/2015/08/29/a-busy-week/">http://katedaviesdesigns.com/2015/08/29/a-busy-week/</a> I'd like to share a mini question, which was asked of me by a delegate - someone who herself had changed her life after a diagnosis of illness - Are there many of you who have made yarny things your work / business after being diagnosed with or as a way of managing life with physical or mental health issues? Do share below if you are able, or message me directly if you prefer... (The person who asked is lobbying the Scottish parliament for more support in this area, so you could let me know if you wanted me to pass on your story or contact details to her.)</p> <p>And as promised - a new research question... I am going over all the thousands of comments from earlier questions at the moment, trying to group and categorise them for the PhD. Behind it all, I have been thinking, is women's amazing creativity... so I am trying to go back and do some more reading about this. What are your views about women as creative? How do you feel this is valued... why do you think women get involved in creative arts? By the way, so many comments emphasise 'I'm not a designer... I'm not creative' but you so obviously ARE! I'd like to leave this open and welcome your thoughts... (Sharing a lovely image of a creative yarny woman from crochet artist Yulia Ustinova)</p>
13/01/2016 10:56	<p>Such an exciting meeting today getting the journalling project underway (needs to be approved by the university ethics committee first, so hang on in there!) Anyhoo, whilst chatting with a colleague, she shared an inspiring idea... if you could write a love letter to your latest make, what would it say? (The exciting beginnings, where it got a little stale, what you mean to each other.) Or perhaps a love letter from your make to you as the maker (I don't want to think about what those three single socks would say to me, left in a bowl, still without partners, maybe even still without a heel!) Feel free to share your 'love letters' here. It is nearly Valentine's after all!</p>
03/02/2016 18:49	<p>Hi all, especially newer members. Bumping previous research questions doesn't seem to be that popular, so instead, would any of you (new or 'founding'!) like to introduce yourselves? How about a picture of your latest make and a comment about how making it impacts on your wellbeing. This is mine... I am knitting a pair of socks for a friend undergoing palliative treatment ... I find doing simple socks quite meditative and it generally relaxes me and helps me to switch off. This one is slightly different though as I know it is for someone in pain, preparing to leave her lovely boys, and the first of my uni peers impacted by cancer. This make is quite a painful one. Your post can be happy or sad - knit and crochet can be both positive and negative for our wellbeing... it's just that mine is a mixture today</p>
23/02/2016 10:57	



DATE	TEXT
29/02/2016 11:22	I have been having a lovely chat about the group with a friend over the weekend - she is my research mentor and has helped me to think through some different aspects. I'd love your thoughts on these... What are your views on ageing (regardless of your age) and how we may use knit and crochet to pass on skills to others, use our yarn-craft to ward of the physical or emotional challenges we face OR get frustrated at what our bodies or minds prevent us from doing compared to the past... and of course, how do you feel about that 'knitting nana' stereotype. Finally - and this touches on questions we have looked at already - how does your making / passing on skills to others / inspiring others make you feel about helping others build their future in different ways? All your responses and sharing on these things appreciated as always. This is a jumble of questions and your jumble of thinking back would be lovely!
10/03/2016 09:35	Morning all, I have been reading quite a bit about Facebook lately... Previously, I have asked questions about what Facebook means to you and why you share your making here - if you want to add to that conversation, please feel free to do so here. The reading I have been doing has looked at Facebook as a commercial platform, analysing our data and pushing adverts in the sidebar based on what we search for on the internet. I know this is true, but I wondered what you feel about that - what and how far are you willing to 'trade' your data? Also, there is still this query over whether social media is truly 'social'. Do you think being connected with people online is a myth, or would you challenge that? I'd love to know what you think - thanks for your responses, Alison
17/05/2016 08:29	Hi there wellbeingers... For those doing the Reflection Boxes, you have a month from today before you post back to me! I hope it is going ok, but remember you can message / email me if you want to chat / ask about anything. For those not doing the boxes, here is one of the options from the project: If your yarn could speak... "What can I do to comfort you today?" OR "Why are you frustrated with me today?"
25/05/2016 08:57	Hello everybody, My own woolly wellbeing is low at the moment as I have broken my wrist and I can't make my thumb and forefinger meet for crafting purposes! One hand typing for drafting chapters from my thesis is pretty slow too. A question from the reflection boxes for you... What colour do you feel today and why? We have had a few recent members - please note that I am no longer posting regular research questions, as there is so much here already to analyse for my PhD, but feel free to scroll through all the previous questions and add your views if you wish.

## APPENDIX 4



### ALL OTHER RESEARCHER INTERACTIONS IN FACEBOOK™ GROUP

DATE	TYPE	TEXT
01/12/2014 12:59	[POST]	Members of this group are contributing to PhD research into the ways women who knit and crochet share their making online. This is a closed group and all posts are confidential between group members. All material will be made anonymous in writing up research. Please read and complete the information and consent documents under 'Files' in order to contribute.
01/12/2014 13:10	[POST]	Thank you! If you'd like to participate in the Woolly Wellbeing Research project, you'll need to read the Participant Information document in 'Files' and then complete this consent form: [LINK] This is so I know you are informed about the project and how your posts could be used. You are contributing to a PhD research project into the ways women share their knit and crochet online. Do you post to ask for advice or to show images of what you have made? Does it help you manage feeling lonely or to connect with other crafter-friends? Lots of these questions will be the topic of posts as we share together. Please bear in mind that this group needs to operate under university ethical guidelines for research. As such, can I ask you to please refrain from posting links which advertise, promote, discount, etc.
05/02/2015 11:52	[POST]	Members of this group are contributing to PhD research into the ways women who knit and crochet share their making online. This is a closed group and all posts are confidential between group members. All material will be made anonymous in writing up research. Please read and complete the information in 'Files' and the consent form in the pinned post in order to contribute.
14/02/2015 09:05	[COMMENT]	Thanks for lovely posts already ladies. Please remember to complete the Google doc with your details (link on pinned post)
14/02/2015 13:54	[POST]	Hoping this works! First attempt at lace knitting with beautiful hand-dyed by [NAME]
14/02/2015 17:46	[COMMENT]	Ooo lots to share here, [NAME] - thanks
14/02/2015 18:48	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME] - the information should be a document under the file tab just by the banner picture. The link to the google doc is in the pinned post at the top of the page. Shout if there is a problem.. Thanks
15/02/2015 11:13	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], can you explain what you mean by therapeutic? I'm really interested in this idea....
15/02/2015 11:25	[COMMENT]	It's so cheerful. Does it feel like a real achievement?



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
15/02/2015 14:34	[COMMENT]	Those are so pretty... I also find crochet (more than knitting - maybe because I am still learning that...) a really good way to calm my anxieties. I can't hold a needle for cross-stitch or beading, but somehow crochet does help my hands to stop shaking.
15/02/2015 14:35	[COMMENT]	No - I totally get it, thank you
15/02/2015 14:36	[COMMENT]	Yes, please, [NAME] - sometimes I'll ask questions you can respond to if you like, but otherwise it is just amazing to share...
15/02/2015 15:06	[POST]	Oh my - thank you all so much for joining... I had no idea so many people in so many places might be interested! (By the way, only about 25 of you have popped your details in the google form on the pinned post - if you could do that, I'd appreciate it. This is confidential, of course). Do treat this as a (lovely - no mean girls here) crafty community group as you may any other, but feel free to ask questions of each other as you reflect on how knit or crochet helps your wellbeing. I will post a Woolly Wellbeing Research question every Wednesday (all the Ws!) which you can respond to if you wish. In the meantime, thank you so much to all the 'I was in it from the beginning' lovelies - [NAMES]
15/02/2015 17:42	[COMMENT]	Love it - I am trying mini hiya needle rather than dpns
15/02/2015 18:38	[COMMENT]	I think quite a lot of people craft to help manage pain - fibromyalgia in particular
15/02/2015 18:42	[COMMENT]	And hello & welcome to [NAME]and [NAME]too
15/02/2015 21:22	[COMMENT]	Just one more row... just one more row...
16/02/2015 10:51	[POST]	Hi and welcome to [NAME]and [NAME]
16/02/2015 15:28	[POST]	I have written a blog post about some of the reservations I have about the threat of trolling on this page... Read if you wish - your comments about trolling on yarny pages are welcome... Alison <a href="http://wp.me/p55LzG-1h">http://wp.me/p55LzG-1h</a>
16/02/2015 15:38	[POST]	Welcome to [NAMES]
16/02/2015 20:27	[COMMENT]	Thanks [NAME]
16/02/2015 22:27	[COMMENT]	Yup -this is what started my journey - thinking about women, sharing tea and sympathy, talking and crafting together. Also interested in making objects that represent something about our identity as women. I'm up for a 'real life' workshop doing these if there are enough people interested in a sensible area.... Unless I can think of a way for us to do an online KAL / CAL version?!
16/02/2015 22:28	[COMMENT]	ooo all about the socks too. I have been looking at this 2-at-a-time technique - is it easy to master?
16/02/2015 22:29	[COMMENT]	Love interchangeables...



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
16/02/2015 22:29	[COMMENT]	Lovely - I want to do some Kool Aid dyeing with my baby (21)
17/02/2015 16:40	[COMMENT]	Worth trying both... I feel like I am trying to knit with my elbows with dpns and found the hiya hiya 23cm circular needles a godsend
17/02/2015 16:47	[COMMENT]	Thanks ladies - I think [NAME] raises good points in the spirit of this group. It's about exploring how we support one another in our communities. [NAME] we may have some research questions in the future about the frustrations of making together, as well as the benefits, but if you have concerns about the KAL / CAL from another page, perhaps it would be good to communicate it there instead? Thanks, Alison
17/02/2015 16:48	[COMMENT]	Laarvley
17/02/2015 16:49	[COMMENT]	I'm just impressed you are working on a second. I have several single socks awaiting a partner!
17/02/2015 16:56	[COMMENT]	That I am, [NAME], that I am...
17/02/2015 16:59	[COMMENT]	Yes, [NAME] - I also make for Cherished Gowns for Angel Babies here on FB
17/02/2015 17:01	[POST]	Love how already this is becoming a community where we are making connections - advising, admiring, supporting. Are you ready for the first big research question tomorrow morning? Coming your way at 8.30 am GMT - take plenty of time to reflect on what you want to say!
17/02/2015 17:36	[POST]	Hi and welcome to [NAMES]
18/02/2015 11:55	[COMMENT]	Thanks for everything so far - and especially to [NAME] and [NAME]... I appreciate what you are going through. I know knit and crochet can be really healing when you are in a dark place. Anyone read Kathryn Vercillo's blog or book? <a href="http://www.crochetsavedmylife.com/">http://www.crochetsavedmylife.com/</a>
18/02/2015 13:40	[COMMENT]	Cor, thanks, [NAME]
18/02/2015 17:29	[COMMENT]	Brilliant! Amazed always at my inability to count to two when it comes to ribbing
18/02/2015 17:36	[COMMENT]	sweet
18/02/2015 17:53	[COMMENT]	Grrr for that label of knit and crochet being 'old' (and what does that mean anyway!?) [NAME] used to crochet in the uni bar and on the bus to lectures (she learnt first and taught me)
18/02/2015 18:44	[POST]	Gosh, overwhelmed by the response today - doubled the group since Tuesday! Please can everyone remember to complete your (confidential) details in the google doc on the pinned post? Only about 1/3 have so far... In the meantime, wow, hello and welcome to [NAMES]
18/02/2015 18:49	[COMMENT]	Having a little weep, [NAME]. Thank you for sharing
18/02/2015 19:22	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME] - absolutely helps
18/02/2015 20:49	[COMMENT]	Superlike



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
19/02/2015 09:14	[COMMENT]	So touched by all these thoughtful comments, ladies - thank you. And [NAME] - no more referring to what you write as drivel and I promise never any challenges to participation here!
19/02/2015 09:15	[COMMENT]	So sweet
19/02/2015 09:31	[COMMENT]	Such a bright paintbox
19/02/2015 13:00	[COMMENT]	Hmmm - should I hint now that next week's research topic is stash related? Hold onto those thoughts!
19/02/2015 13:47	[COMMENT]	Squish, [NAME]
19/02/2015 14:41	[POST]	Shared from [NAME] and Yarnspirations. Making Matters!
19/02/2015 22:11	[COMMENT]	Tunisian plus entrelac! My head just spun right around...
19/02/2015 23:34	[COMMENT]	Hope not too sad, [NAME]. For lots of us, I think, online groups might be the only place we share our crafty ideas and makes
20/02/2015 07:45	[COMMENT]	I am still on section 3.5!
20/02/2015 08:52	[POST]	We are now 200+! Welcome to [NAMES] If you haven't already done so, please have a read of the information under the FILES tab near the banner picture and complete this form:
20/02/2015 15:53	[COMMENT]	And Hi to [NAME] too!
20/02/2015 19:26	[COMMENT]	So cute!
20/02/2015 19:27	[COMMENT]	Now I know what to do with all of this in my stash
20/02/2015 21:30	[COMMENT]	Nice to meet you, [NAME]
21/02/2015 14:01	[POST]	Just picked this up on Twitter - a lovely story on why we knit / crochet -
23/02/2015 11:13	[COMMENT]	Such beautiful work
23/02/2015 19:43	[COMMENT]	Such fun!
24/02/2015 09:20	[POST]	Hi and welcome to [NAMES] Thanks for joining - please remember to sign up on the google doc on the pinned post at the top of the page if you haven't already!





DATE	TYPE	TEXT
24/02/2015 09:29	[POST]	Hello ladies - exciting news for the summer... We have the all-clear to host a virtual 'stitch-in' for the GB Creativity and Wellbeing Plus festival (organised by London Arts in Health Forum, with lots of London based events and others around the country - and now online!) <a href="http://www.creativityandwellbeing.org.uk/">http://www.creativityandwellbeing.org.uk/</a> This will take place around the first weekend of June - but how to organise it? It seems unfair on those in different time zones to host an online event just over a GMT afternoon. How about whenever the afternoon of Saturday 6 / Sunday 7 June is where we are, that's when we join in and post. What to post? Perhaps an image of what you are doing with a short comment on how it affects your feelings of wellbeing? Any suggestions about how we could make this fun, please comment below... (and get ready for the Wednesday Research Question coming tomorrow!) And your work is lovely... Be proud. You don't need a crochet award from others to remember how much you enjoy this for yourself
24/02/2015 22:21	[COMMENT]	
24/02/2015 22:22	[COMMENT]	Thanks [NAME]
26/02/2015 10:14	[COMMENT]	So interesting, ladies - would appreciate more pictures if you are willing to share
27/02/2015 12:53	[COMMENT]	My husband has suggested I should add to this thread... can't stop to count, as I am just casting on another sock... (Different WIPs for different purposes, right? Blankets for snuggle / socks for travelling / cardigans for learning)
27/02/2015 13:12	[POST]	Lawks! We are now 250+ Hi and welcome to [NAMES] Please read the info and enter your details in the google form on the pinned post if you haven't already done so... Enjoy the community posts and watch out for Wednesday Woolly Wellbeing Research topics
27/02/2015 13:13	[COMMENT]	Ooh! and [NAME]
27/02/2015 13:43	[COMMENT]	Brilliant!
27/02/2015 13:44	[COMMENT]	Welcome [NAME] - I think we met when Neptune was being created!
27/02/2015 14:39	[COMMENT]	Hmm not sure - is this link accessible? <a href="http://goo.gl/forms/R5bVJguueX">http://goo.gl/forms/R5bVJguueX</a>
27/02/2015 14:41	[COMMENT]	Hoping crochet keep you calm
02/03/2015 18:36	[COMMENT]	Sorry didn't spot this earlier -   I see you have posted now -is that all ok?
02/03/2015 21:47	[COMMENT]	Thanks [NAME], those links are so useful
04/03/2015 11:26	[COMMENT]	Lovely comments, ladies, thank you - these stories are so touching
04/03/2015 11:27	[COMMENT]	Superlike, [NAME]!



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
04/03/2015 11:30	[POST]	Hi lovely ladies -welcome to all the newbies (proper email for you guys tomorrow) In the meantime, can I ask that you all check you have completed the google form? Over 100 members have not done this yet... Here's a quick link if that helps
05/03/2015 09:26	[POST]	Hi and welcome to all you lovely newbie ladies: [NAMES] Please remember to complete the confidential google form here, [LINK]so your responses can be used for research. Additional info is in the 'Files' tab at the top of the page
05/03/2015 11:58	[COMMENT]	Gold stars to you guys!
08/03/2015 15:33	[POST]	Happy International Women's Day, everyone. I like the blogger Tom of Holland - today he has an posted his thoughts on inspirational women who have influenced him, from fellow designers to his mum. Following on from this week's research topic re. craft connecting us with family, anyone feel like sharing about inspirational women who have inspired them in knit and crochet?
09/03/2015 10:47	[COMMENT]	I am full paid up SOS - really trying to make pairs, but them see other lovely wool!
09/03/2015 20:02	[COMMENT]	I agree, [NAME] - thanks for sharing
10/03/2015 13:04	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME] - yes, I can write generally about the range , which is far more far flung than I had ever imagined! USA, Canada, UK, Australia, South Africa, Egypt, Singapore, Kuwait... how exciting that our lovely, knitty affinity spreads so wide.
11/03/2015 18:01	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME]
11/03/2015 18:35	[COMMENT]	Yes, [NAME]and [NAME]It is closed, so only members of the group can see what is posted here. [NAME] - do you have a concern?
12/03/2015 10:28	[POST]	Hi and Welcome! [NAMES]
12/03/2015 10:29	[COMMENT]	and [NAME]
12/03/2015 11:07	[POST]	A blog post from Recovered Threads, if you fancy a read:
12/03/2015 12:59	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 12:59	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 12:59	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:00	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:00	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:00	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:01	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
12/03/2015 13:02	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:02	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:03	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:03	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - just checking... May I use this image in a conference presentation and journal paper?
12/03/2015 13:04	[COMMENT]	Thanks!
12/03/2015 13:05	[COMMENT]	Thanks!
12/03/2015 20:52	[COMMENT]	Thanks!
14/03/2015 08:26	[COMMENT]	Thanks
16/03/2015 09:59	[POST]	Just some Monday fun...
16/03/2015 13:42	[COMMENT]	I have powder and lipstick on right now (nope... I so don't)
17/03/2015 07:15	[COMMENT]	Your blanket is lovely! And of course, feel free to comment on any previous questions, as I get a notification to pick it up... all responses appreciated
18/03/2015 19:43	[COMMENT]	Brilliant timing - and we got tweeted by London Arts for Health in response to this news too!
18/03/2015 19:43	[COMMENT]	Arts in Health Forum @LAHFArtsHealth 10h10 hours ago Talking of Knitting see the Big Online 'Sit and Stitch' as part of Creativity and Wellbeing Week Plus... <a href="http://fb.me/767QHaUQ0">http://fb.me/767QHaUQ0</a> 2 retweets1 favouriteReply Retweeted2 Favourited1More
19/03/2015 10:00	[POST]	It's Thursday 'hello' day! Hi and welcome to [NAMES] Please remember to complete the google form with your details [LINK]Thanks, Alison
19/03/2015 10:02	[COMMENT]	Thanks [NAME]!
19/03/2015 11:55	[COMMENT]	Thanks ladies!
19/03/2015 12:32	[POST]	A blog post recording the Kool Aid dye fun had by me and my 'baby' for Mother's Day
19/03/2015 13:49	[COMMENT]	Just soaked and squished by hand, [NAME]
19/03/2015 13:50	[COMMENT]	Swished! Although I guess squished still works
22/03/2015 09:46	[COMMENT]	Feel free to share with yarn addicts, [NAME]. And hold that thought on CAL for Wednesday's question!
22/03/2015 15:50	[COMMENT]	Lilypond-tastic!
23/03/2015 09:30	[COMMENT]	Beautiful... this sort of shawl is next on my list
23/03/2015 15:44	[COMMENT]	My Craft Life has just released a picture!



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
23/03/2015 21:44	[POST]	I shouldn't try to do this stuff on my phone! Big fingers accidentally blocked some one asking to join the group - I only remember she may have been called [NAME]? If you know who this may be, please ask her to have another go or message me her name so I can add! Thanks
23/03/2015 21:47	[COMMENT]	Yes - was thinking about a question for this - negative impact on wellbeing with frustrations etc!
23/03/2015 22:08	[COMMENT]	Thanks - just fixing now!
25/03/2015 20:56	[COMMENT]	I love those little apples
25/03/2015 20:58	[COMMENT]	[NAME], this so exactly the conversation my daughter and I were having tonight as we were going through her stash!
28/03/2015 17:33	[POST]	Hello Woolly Wellbeing peeps - hubs and I are escaping for a few days R&R from tomorrow, so the research question will be posted on Thursday , not Wednesday. Enjoy the rest of your weekend - watcha making? I am setting up the heels on a few socks as I have to really concentrate on that! Then I can take them with me and just stitch away...
30/03/2015 14:12	[COMMENT]	I love that idea of keeping memories in a blanket like this
02/04/2015 09:25	[POST]	Hi ladies - we are back from a blowy, sunny break in North Yorkshire, UK and batteries are recharged.... Thank you for your kind wishes. Hi and welcome to... [NAMES] Please remember to enter your details in the google form on the pinned post.
02/04/2015 09:39	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - I find the Purl Bee written and video instructions helped me with Kitchener stitch... I haven't 'got' it yet, but this makes me faster! <a href="http://www.purlbee.com/2008/01/23/kitchener-stitch/">http://www.purlbee.com/2008/01/23/kitchener-stitch/</a>
02/04/2015 09:42	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME] - it should be visible on the pinned post at the top of the page, but here is a link: [LINK]
02/04/2015 11:34	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME] - the focus is on women for this research... for now!
02/04/2015 21:28	[COMMENT]	Wow - most of you guys are way more organised and disciplined than me! Sometimes I set myself a 'finishing week', but I still have lots on the go...
07/04/2015 08:20	[POST]	I give my first full paper at an academic conference tomorrow - on the setting up of the Woolly Wellbeing Research Group! Thanks for everyone who confirmed that I could use their images.
07/04/2015 14:45	[COMMENT]	Aww, thanks, ladies - and yes, [NAME], I have cast on a sock for that very purpose!
08/04/2015 19:19	[COMMENT]	Thanks, everyone - it went well, I think! We definitely had the best pictures! No time for questions, unfortunately, although one person asked me later if people (in general - she was coming at it from a big amateur baker point of view) tended to get 'addicted' to certain social media communities, like sharing on FB, Pinterest or Instagram - what do you think?
08/04/2015 19:22	[COMMENT]	Say it, sister



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
08/04/2015 19:34	[POST]	I've done it again! Fumble thumbs has blocked [NAME] rather than someone near her name on the member list who had posted something inappropriate - Sorry! I think she had a friend in the group... if so, can you contact me? Thanks Alison
08/04/2015 19:37	[COMMENT]	Yes, [NAME] - I thought this was an important point too
09/04/2015 15:09	[POST]	Hi ladies - as promised, I thought I would share some 'word clouds' we have made from responses to some of the posts. These collect the most frequently used words and present them in a group, with the most frequently used words as the largest - you get the idea... Here are the word clouds for the first few questions - on feeling connected and on wellbeing:
09/04/2015 15:10	[POST]	Here are a few more word clouds - on 'stash' and what you feel about research on social media:
09/04/2015 15:11	[POST]	Finally, here are word clouds of our most recent questions - on Knit or Crochet-Alongs and what you feel about unfinished items - I think they are so interesting!
11/04/2015 09:20	[COMMENT]	I think I need to have a go at this!
12/04/2015 20:33	[COMMENT]	Crochet is my cardio (bad dum tish)
13/04/2015 07:33	[COMMENT]	That's amazing... like a sunset
14/04/2015 10:48	[COMMENT]	*Giggle* [NAME]
15/04/2015 16:27	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME], I recognise lots of things here
15/04/2015 22:14	[COMMENT]	Well, not really 'like', [NAME]. I do hope you recover soon.
16/04/2015 06:40	[COMMENT]	So cute!
17/04/2015 18:22	[POST]	I just found out that tomorrow is #craftselfie Saturday... in Canada, anyway. We have about 20 members here from Canada, so we could get involved, yes? We are a global group! Here's the link if you want to know more:
18/04/2015 16:26	[COMMENT]	I'm also a regular train knitter, [NAME] - one conductor on the Leicester -London line always gets misty eyed about his nan knitting when he sees me
19/04/2015 15:11	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME]. Do you want to PM me?
20/04/2015 16:33	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], I'd like to use this image in a journal article, but would need your written permission for copyright. If you are ok with this, could you please PM me your email address so I can contact you?
20/04/2015 16:34	[COMMENT]	Hi again [NAME], I'd like to use this image in a journal article, but would need your written permission for copyright. If you are ok with this, could you please PM me your email address so I can contact you?
20/04/2015 16:54	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], I'd like to use this image in a journal article, but would need your written permission for copyright. If you are ok with this, could you please PM me your email address so I can contact you?



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
20/04/2015 16:55	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], I'd like to use this image again in a journal article, but would need your written permission for copyright. If you are ok with this, could you please PM me your email address so I can contact you?
22/04/2015 16:15	[COMMENT]	[NAME], could you please check your 'other' inbox? I have messaged you for a favour....
22/04/2015 16:34	[COMMENT]	That's a beautiful read
24/04/2015 10:55	[COMMENT]	Did everyone see the crochet poppies for the Gallipoli commemoration?
25/04/2015 08:56	[COMMENT]	Rubbish! I have split the bamboo on my little hiya sock needles. It might depend on where you got it... I know our Lys owner would replace broken items and she would return it to KnitPro on a customer's behalf.
25/04/2015 09:00	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/Yarn-Bombs-on-the-City-Streets/2015/04/25/article2781261.ece">http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/Yarn-Bombs-on-the-City-Streets/2015/04/25/article2781261.ece</a>
25/04/2015 09:03	[COMMENT]	Lovely yarn bombing happening in the wood of Derbyshire - Belper UK. <a href="http://www.anneclarkhandmade.co.uk/here-and-there/">http://www.anneclarkhandmade.co.uk/here-and-there/</a>
25/04/2015 10:12	[COMMENT]	Do love [NAME]
26/04/2015 09:07	[COMMENT]	Something here in the UK named udderly smooth - we call it moo cream!
26/04/2015 18:39	[COMMENT]	Knitting ourselves together...
28/04/2015 20:49	[COMMENT]	Brilliant - thanks, [NAME]
29/04/2015 21:05	[COMMENT]	Oh, I am so glad I asked this! Such lovely posts, thank you
30/04/2015 08:43	[POST]	Hi all - I have just been watching this talk on 'wellness', and it made me think about quite a lot of things that you have been posting. Sir Harry Burns is a medical doctor, so some of it is a bit complex (for me, anyway - hippocampus, anyone?!) but there are some very interesting things to say on what really causes people to be 'well'. If you have 20 minutes, you might like a look....
30/04/2015 08:53	[POST]	Hi everyone, it has been a while since I did a welcome to new members, so "Hi, it's nice to meet you" to [NAMES] Please remember to read the info in 'Files' and sign up your details on the google form pinned at the top of the page. Feel free to have a scroll and comment on any questions which we've had over the last few months. Alison
30/04/2015 11:38	[POST]	A little infographic (thanks, hubs) to summarise how WWRG has been growing (between starting in Feb to beginning of April) Some amazin' facts here!
30/04/2015 12:29	[COMMENT]	Hope yarny crafting can help you get through, [NAME]
30/04/2015 13:16	[COMMENT]	Sure, [NAME] -Influencers are people whose posts generate the most comments and / or likes... so they may not post frequently, but when they do, people respond. (Sorry, should have explained that earlier)



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
30/04/2015 19:18	[COMMENT]	[NAME], knitting sounds just what is needed... and maybe don't be too hard on yourself!
03/05/2015 22:35	[COMMENT]	lovely
04/05/2015 13:32	[POST]	Happy Star Wars Day...
05/05/2015 11:42	[POST]	Check out the last page, ladies !!! Keep the afternoon of Saturday 6th June in your diaries - wherever you are in the world
06/05/2015 09:05	[COMMENT]	Keep on keeping on, [NAME]
06/05/2015 12:55	[COMMENT]	Quite a few of you are saying that you know people 'in real life' who you share with in FB groups - is this common for others? We love us a star ripple in this house.... I know that feeling, though. When [NAME] went to college I did a patchwork quilt and a cushion cross stitched with "hug", so I could still look after her!
08/05/2015 15:48	[COMMENT]	
12/05/2015 14:59	[COMMENT]	Love the colours
12/05/2015 15:49	[POST]	If you have a few minutes, have a listen. Inspiring!
12/05/2015 18:35	[COMMENT]	But should clarify Radio 4 have issued apology for referring to it as knitting!
16/05/2015 20:24	[COMMENT]	This makes me have a little weep - beautifully done
19/05/2015 16:33	[COMMENT]	Famous, [NAME]!!!
19/05/2015 21:17	[COMMENT]	Beautiful
20/05/2015 14:25	[COMMENT]	that noun / verb idea is really interesting, [NAME]
20/05/2015 14:30	[POST]	<a href="http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-chatselfie-reefknitter-20150510-story.html">http://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-chatselfie-reefknitter-20150510-story.html</a>
26/05/2015 08:56	[POST]	Feeling philosophical? Take a few minutes to watch this beautiful piece about making and empathy
26/05/2015 19:00	[POST]	Thanks [NAMES] and others for reporting spam - dealt with.
27/05/2015 09:50	[POST]	Hello lovely WWRG ladies, I am afraid I have not prepared a research question this week - it has been a bit frantic over the last few days, for reasons I won't go into here... but suffice to say I am a bit frazzled and emotional! We do have our Big Online Sit and Stitch next Saturday, so I will post about that later in the week. To keep the worries and the blahs away, I am sock knitting. So, for today, why don't you fill the page with some lovely makes you are doing at the moment, especially ones that help keep you calm and comforted.
27/05/2015 12:49	[COMMENT]	Thanks, ladies - I am off for a snooze now... My daughter has been in hospital, but is home now. You know how it is, you can keep going on adrenalin, but when it is over you have an energy / emotion crash.
27/05/2015 22:00	[COMMENT]	[NAME], my baby was a titchy preemie too, but now leans down to pat me on the head.





DATE	TYPE	TEXT
29/05/2015 09:30	[COMMENT]	Of course, [NAME]... Just comment on whichever posts you wish or add comments / pictures of your own. Lots of opportunities still to come...
02/06/2015 09:11	[POST]	Morning all - I am catching up with myself and preparing for some crafty wellbeing workshops at university this week. Although this is aimed at new participants, if anyone from WWRG would like to do this initial survey, feel free...
02/06/2015 10:57	[POST]	I have just discovered this, from the 1958 Anchor Manual of Needlework... Thoughts?! "Crocheting, like any other form of lace-making, has been abused, becoming commonplace and thus falling into disuse"
03/06/2015 07:11	[COMMENT]	Yes! Completely group related... it's amazing how it affects us when we lose our yarny mojo - fingers twitching, but can't seem to settle to anything. Something will grab your attention in time, [NAME]
03/06/2015 07:12	[COMMENT]	I thought it was such an odd comment to have in a book! I think it was to do with doilies becoming unfashionable in the 50s?
03/06/2015 07:13	[COMMENT]	Some lovely insights here too <a href="http://saltburn-by-the-sea.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/white-rabbits-and-adventures-in.html">http://saltburn-by-the-sea.blogspot.co.uk/2015/05/white-rabbits-and-adventures-in.html</a>
03/06/2015 11:27	[COMMENT]	That's interesting, [NAME], thinking about celebrating your independent creativity.
03/06/2015 13:10	[COMMENT]	I love that idea of sharing across generations, [NAME]
03/06/2015 19:16	[COMMENT]	I know that Ravelry rabbit hole, too, [NAME]
04/06/2015 15:19	[POST]	Hi everyone - If you are interested in taking part in the Big Online Sit and Stitch, it is this Saturday... The idea is that, wherever you are in the world, whenever it is 1-4pm, we can have a digital get-together. We can 'chat' through posts and share what we are making through pictures. You can show off your latest creation - but if you'd like to do something together, how about some sustainable cotton cleansing pads? There is a pattern for this in the FILES section at the top of the page. See you on Saturday? Alison
04/06/2015 16:22	[COMMENT]	Thanks for the tip, [NAME] - I'm doing that now!
04/06/2015 18:56	[COMMENT]	Wendy, it is for 1-4 wherever you are, so there may be someone online taking part throughout the day-
04/06/2015 21:02	[POST]	via the Drops Facebook page!
05/06/2015 08:33	[COMMENT]	Hope you have a great day doing this, [NAME]



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
06/06/2015 09:29	[POST]	It is Big Online Sit and Stitch day! Wherever you are in the world, take a little while this afternoon to have a gentle, mindful knit or crochet time as part of Creativity and Wellbeing week (see lots of other things on the London Arts for Health page on Facebook). Post a pic and chat about what you are making.. adding a comment about how creativity is good for your wellbeing! There is a pattern for some sustainable cotton face cleansing pads in Files, or do your own thing.... See you later!
06/06/2015 12:01	[POST]	Big Online Stitch Sit and Stitch... I am doing my Janina Kallio Interlude shawl, with lots of meditative garter stitch
06/06/2015 12:46	[COMMENT]	Sleep well, [NAME]... it will be Saturday afternoon somewhere, so feel free to join in if and when it suits you. ????
06/06/2015 13:10	[POST]	Lovely socks for my 'baby' girl... my first textured pair for a challenge
06/06/2015 14:25	[COMMENT]	I love making these too
06/06/2015 14:25	[COMMENT]	Brilliant singsock combo
06/06/2015 14:32	[COMMENT]	Love, hi [NAME]
06/06/2015 14:34	[COMMENT]	Lovely place to knit. Have a relaxing time, [NAME]
06/06/2015 15:33	[COMMENT]	Sounds lovely, [NAME]
06/06/2015 15:35	[COMMENT]	I like Design Seeds... online site that puts together colours based on pictures
06/06/2015 15:36	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://design-seeds.com/">http://design-seeds.com/</a>
07/06/2015 07:54	[COMMENT]	Thanks for your lovely comments, [NAME]
07/06/2015 17:51	[POST]	Goodness! What a flurry of Woolly Wellbeing activity, especially thanks to the support of [NAME] over at the [NAME]. Thanks and hello to... [NAMES] Please have a read of the pinned post, which directs you to participant information about the research and CRUCIALLY a googleform which allows you to 'sign up' and therefore allows me to use your comments and images. (By the way, I will always double check with you about using a picture you post, or a particularly sensitive comment). To make life easier, here is the link to the form: [LINK]I wonder if it would be useful for new members if I 'bumped' some questions from earlier in the research, so that you can read what others have written already and perhaps contribute your own views - what do you think?
07/06/2015 17:53	[COMMENT]	Hi and thanks, [NAME] - yes, I am interested in how we feel a connection with people when we share a pattern
07/06/2015 18:06	[COMMENT]	Bumping this post first, so new members can see some interesting information about the diversity of the group from the first few months - I shall need to do another one shortly!



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
08/06/2015 09:42	[POST]	Good morning and welcome to... [NAMES] Please have a read of the pinned post, which directs you to participant information about the research and CRUCIALLY a googleform which allows you to 'sign up' and therefore allows me to use your comments and images. (By the way, I will always double check with you about using a picture you post, or a particularly sensitive comment). To make life easier, here is the link to the form: [LINK]I am going to 'bump' some questions from earlier in the research, so that you can read what others have written already and perhaps contribute your own views - looking forward to seeing what you think!
08/06/2015 09:48	[COMMENT]	This was our very first research topic - the sort of pictures we post online to show what we are creating- crafting makies, rather than selfies!
08/06/2015 09:49	[COMMENT]	...and this is quite a nice broad question for any newbie ladies to contribute to
08/06/2015 09:50	[COMMENT]	Last one for today - not a research question, but a consideration about trolling and the point that this is a supportive crafting community...
08/06/2015 18:02	[COMMENT]	Beautiful, [NAME]
09/06/2015 08:10	[COMMENT]	Hi newbies - this was our first research question - about feeling lonely or feeling connected through knit or crochet online - have a read and add your comments if you wish.
09/06/2015 08:14	[POST]	<a href="http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/Crocheting-Helps-D_C_-Woman-Cope-With-Depression_Washington-DC-306566301.html">http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/Crocheting-Helps-D_C_-Woman-Cope-With-Depression_Washington-DC-306566301.html</a>
10/06/2015 10:16	[POST]	Hi everyone, especially the flurry of ladies who have joined us over the last month. Rather than posting a new research question, I am going to 'bump' three of the earlier ones today and three more on Friday. This way, people new to the group can see comments and responses they may otherwise miss and add their own views to the research. With thanks to everyone Alison
10/06/2015 10:19	[COMMENT]	Bumping this for new members to consider...
10/06/2015 10:20	[COMMENT]	Bumping this question about links with older generations for new members to consider...
10/06/2015 10:21	[COMMENT]	Bumping this for new members to contribute if they wish
11/06/2015 12:35	[POST]	Thanks, new ladies, for your comments on earlier research questions - I really appreciate your views. Everyone is welcome to add comments to precious posts, as I pick them up through the software I am using to collect the responses. I am writing my draft chapter on wellbeing at the moment, and would love to hear more of your views on what this means to you, so I will 'bump' a more recent question which you could contribute to if you wish... I am trying to illustrate (and challenge) some of the academic literature with views from the group.
11/06/2015 12:36	[COMMENT]	Bumping this as discussed, for newer members (or those who have been reflecting on it for a while) to contribute - thanks!



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
11/06/2015 12:37	[COMMENT]	Hilarious!
11/06/2015 13:28	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME] - that idea of having a place in the world is really inspirational
12/06/2015 07:56	[COMMENT]	Hi everyone - 'bumping' this for new members to see...
12/06/2015 07:57	[COMMENT]	bumping' this question of unfinished objects...
12/06/2015 07:58	[COMMENT]	bumping' this for new members
12/06/2015 08:00	[POST]	Morning all - I have just bumped 3 research questions from earlier in the project, if anyone would like to share their views - on managing pain, on unfinished objects and on why / not participation in crochet- or knit- alongs (CALs and KALs). All opinions valued!
12/06/2015 10:05	[COMMENT]	Just have a look at the posts and respond to as many or few as you wish, [NAME]. Just don't want newer members to feel they have missed out!
12/06/2015 10:44	[COMMENT]	Lovely stories, thank you. [NAME], it is so exciting to hear you were part of the Anzac centenary poppies project. The pictures were amazing.
12/06/2015 18:24	[POST]	It's World Wide Knit (or crochet, I reckon) in Public Day on Saturday 13th June, so post your pictures here! I am feeling VERY married and will be spending time knitting a shawl at the 'Andercon' Thunderbirds convention in Leicester. I don't suppose Lady Penelope used to knit or crochet, as she was a) too busy internationally rescuing people and b) yarn would have got tangled up in her strings
12/06/2015 18:26	[COMMENT]	Poor you, [NAME] - I know that is so painful
12/06/2015 22:24	[COMMENT]	Yes, [NAME], I am planning to come over in the last week. Pictures look fab.
13/06/2015 11:16	[POST]	Thunderbirds are GO for Worldwide Knitting in Public Day
15/06/2015 10:54	[COMMENT]	[NAME], making 3 Sophie blankets is amazing!
15/06/2015 10:56	[COMMENT]	[NAME], can you explain about swaps? Is this for blanket squares? I've not come across that before...
16/06/2015 16:25	[COMMENT]	and they wonder why the Philae satellite woke up... I reckon it was The Clangers. Moomins in Inside Crochet too
16/06/2015 16:26	[COMMENT]	Sweet!
17/06/2015 08:45	[COMMENT]	[NAME], would it work to create a 'lid' for the smaller pot, attached at 'north', but with button hole / loop tabs at 'east, south, west' and small buttons on the larger pot cover? This wouldn't give you a cover for the larger one, though...
17/06/2015 08:47	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2015-06-09/knit-your-own-tiny-clanger">http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2015-06-09/knit-your-own-tiny-clanger</a>
17/06/2015 16:07	[COMMENT]	I like 'monkey mind' and 'ducks of life', [NAME]and [NAME]!
17/06/2015 16:08	[COMMENT]	[NAME], I hope looking at posts from others on the page helps you find a way of managing.



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
19/06/2015 10:50	[POST]	Any London / South East UK members interested in this? 2 textile artists calling for help with an installation at the Southbank Centre - with late June and July knitting sessions.... CALLING ALL KNITTERS Lasmin Salmon and Celia Pym are both artists Together they have developed a process of shared knitting. Working side by side they gradually add individually pieces to a larger work. Lasmin and Celia have created an evolving installation for the Southbank Centre's Festival of Love. They are inviting knitters to help them add to their large-scale, collaborative textile sculpture. Join them for knitting sessions from 11am- 4pm on Saturday 27th June Saturday 4th July Saturday 18th July
19/06/2015 14:59	[POST]	Hi lovely ladies Sweet child and I are off on a little holiday next week. I am not sure about internet connection where we are in deep rural countryside, so I thought I'd better announce a week's break from research questions! Enjoy the community next week and I will share my holiday makes with you when we get back!
29/06/2015 17:20	[POST]	(trigger warning) Hi all It is with real sadness that I have heard the news that Marinke Slump - aka 'A Creative Being' - has lost her fight against the darkness of depression and taken her life. Marinke was a great champion of the concept of stitching for mental health wellbeing and a supporter of the research here on the page as well as for me personally. We have lost a warm and happy light. A message from her sister, along with a link to Wink's memorial page can be found in the blog link below.
29/06/2015 18:33	[POST]	#MandalasForWink
29/06/2015 22:11	[POST]	<a href="http://www.crochetconcupiscence.com/2015/06/mandalasformarinke-crochet-project-in-memory-of-wink-from-a-creative-being/">http://www.crochetconcupiscence.com/2015/06/mandalasformarinke-crochet-project-in-memory-of-wink-from-a-creative-being/</a>
30/06/2015 14:50	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - thanks so much for posting this. Wink very much in my thoughts today and thinking about the group support too &lt3
01/07/2015 09:10	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME] - funnily enough, I have just been writing about wellbeing and this definition of 5 elements, including giving, learning and being mindful is what I think the research is all about. Let's have more GPs prescribing craft groups!
01/07/2015 09:18	[POST]	Hi everyone... Have been feeling a bit mixed about posting a research question today. What has struck me lately is that this group is so good about being mindful of members' wellbeing, supporting and encouraging one another. Yes, it is the focus of my research, but the root of it is based in exactly what the group demonstrates - yarny crafty women being a community, regardless of where we are in the world. So - this week, let's just celebrate what we are making and who we are making for, enjoy the quiet reflection time in stitching or the silly giggles of being in a group. Feel free to post pictures or stories of what you are making, who you are with or who is in your mind. Let's all keep on looking after each other! Alison
01/07/2015 09:19	[COMMENT]	Can't wait to get home and get on with these socks - keeping my 'baby' warm (nearly 22 and the feet of a small child)



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
01/07/2015 09:35	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - that is beautiful. Much talent!
01/07/2015 12:22	[COMMENT]	Not exactly 'like', [NAME], but I hope you know what I mean. It's all about support today. I am sure your friends appreciate your care.
01/07/2015 20:01	[COMMENT]	Yes, I know what you mean, [NAME]. Not sure, but I'll look into it!
10/07/2015 08:54	[POST]	For any Woolly Wellbeing Wimbledon Watchers today (and hopefully Sunday???) <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/216bQP4Df0fPlxnckKJ97xg/new-balls-of-wool-please">http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/216bQP4Df0fPlxnckKJ97xg/new-balls-of-wool-please</a>
16/07/2015 08:19	[COMMENT]	Yay! Congrats Grand-Aunty
16/07/2015 08:38	[POST]	<p>Hello all and apologies - I am currently at the Design 4 Health Conference in Sheffield and have been away from my computer... the days merged into one, I had a really early start to chair some presentations yesterday, one thing led to another and Wednesday was over before I realised! I hope all are well and I am forgiven for abandoning you on Research Day. I will post a question a little later this afternoon, but wanted to put something else out there right now. I have been really rocked by the sad passing of Marinke Slump and I know many of you have too - I have been blown away by the lovely, supportive messages people have been posting here, trying to ensure that members knew there was always a listening ear / shoulder available. I needed to talk all this over with my research supervisors too - they have been really helpful for me as a 'human' and also wanted to guide me as a researcher. So... one of the things they wanted me to remind you was that if anyone has been really distressed by this news and wanted to leave the research project, then of course, please feel free to do so. Message me if you would like, or just click to unfollow if you prefer. My supervisors also suggested that we could have a thread here just reminding everyone that you should never suffer alone and that there is lots of great help out there if you are affected by depression or struggling in any way with your mental health wellbeing. I am going to put some UK contacts for support in the comments to this post and would like to ask if you are able to add to this: Woolly Wellbeing Research Group is global and it would be lovely if we could have contact details for mental health support groups wherever you are in the world. My super daughter said the thing that made the most difference to me, and it has been echoed in lots of the comments in the group - that all this sadness reminds us that what we are exploring together is really important and simple sticks and yarn can make a difference to how we get through. Oof - serious stuff done. Thanks - and do add good contacts below if you see your area isn't represented. Alison</p>
16/07/2015 08:38	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org/">http://www.samaritans.org/</a>
16/07/2015 08:38	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://www.mind.org.uk/">http://www.mind.org.uk/</a>



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
16/07/2015 14:50	[POST]	I see [NAME] Neptune!
16/07/2015 14:55	[COMMENT]	Pride of place, [NAME]
16/07/2015 20:32	[COMMENT]	I tnik you're onto something there, [NAME]and [NAME]
17/07/2015 11:52	[COMMENT]	Any useful contact numbers for MH support from the US or Australasia anyone can provide?
17/07/2015 17:46	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME]
18/07/2015 17:27	[COMMENT]	That's amazing!
18/07/2015 17:35	[COMMENT]	Bumping for new members
18/07/2015 17:47	[POST]	"If you want a big picnic, you've got to have a big blanket" Voices collected from Sofia Olins to make this lovely video
18/07/2015 22:02	[POST]	From over on the Winwick sock page:
20/07/2015 15:57	[COMMENT]	So beautiful, [NAME]
20/07/2015 16:17	[COMMENT]	Superlike
22/07/2015 10:39	[POST]	Happy Wednesday everyone. I hope you are all making happily today - I am writing a paper for a conference in November and a report for the university to summarise how the research is progressing - you have given me so much to say! A different kind of question this week - and one I am happy for you to take time to think over, plan and get back to me here or via private messaging. The next key part of the research plan is to work with individuals and 'physical' groups who knit and crochet together and compare what they say to the research questions - what is different / similar to what we have shared here over the last 6+ months. For members who are not in the UK, would you like to take part in a Facetime interview (like Skype - a video call available through Facebook) or questionnaire which would expand on some of the threads here? If you are in the UK, are you a member of (or do you run) a knit / crochet group? (I know quite a few people belong in groups together.) Would you be interested in allowing me to come and be part of one of your sessions to talk to your group, record our conversations or interview individuals or small groups? I would explain the ideas behind the research and would only use people's comments if they gave permission. I am sure you'd want to chat to members first before you came back to me. So, if you'd like to be part of this next phase of the research through to 2016, have a think and let me know!
22/07/2015 15:41	[COMMENT]	[NAME]and [NAME]I do want to work with people who craft alone - perhaps you'd like to consider the interview / questionnaire option? I din't want you to feel left out!
22/07/2015 17:27	[COMMENT]	[NAME], that's a straightforward drive for me. Do you want to chat to your group and drop me a message if people are interested?





DATE	TYPE	TEXT
23/07/2015 11:39	[COMMENT]	Amazing!
26/07/2015 07:18	[COMMENT]	Such beautiful work
28/07/2015 23:05	[COMMENT]	Sorted some out for this and will post at the weekend, [NAME]. Are you still exploring which charities to donate to?
29/07/2015 10:50	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME] - I wondered if Leeds Women's Aid might also be interested, as they do request clothing items <a href="http://www.leedswomensaid.co.uk/get-involved/donate-items/">http://www.leedswomensaid.co.uk/get-involved/donate-items/</a>
29/07/2015 19:26	[COMMENT]	Ooo [NAME], that's a really interesting idea - I shall add it to my analysis immediately!
30/07/2015 11:33	[POST]	[NAMES] and [NAME]I have messaged you - it may go to 'others' box Thanks Alison
30/07/2015 12:17	[COMMENT]	Beautiful
02/08/2015 21:29	[POST]	no message
03/08/2015 09:15	[POST]	no message
05/08/2015 10:45	[COMMENT]	I love the apple crumble connection, [NAME]
05/08/2015 10:46	[COMMENT]	I agree [NAME] - I want to unpack it a bit more and views on here are really good at being grounded, sharing people's individual motivations
06/08/2015 11:36	[COMMENT]	That's really helpful, thank you!
07/08/2015 10:07	[POST]	Have tidied my wool....
08/08/2015 15:32	[COMMENT]	Looking at it, the amount of insomnia purchases is scary.
12/08/2015 14:09	[POST]	Apologies for the late post today, ladies - I have been at a workshop learning how to do amazing things with an overlocker! I really enjoyed reading the post below from Emily of Mummy Limited, writing a guest blog for 'A Playful Day' - especially her comment "The Internet and it's vibrant creative community has unlocked my own creativity in ways I could never have imagined" I wondered how many of you follow blogs / bloggers and how do they inspire you to be creative? Who would you recommend for a great read and / or inspiring buzz? (I love the yarny blogs of Louise Scollay and Karie Westermann.)
17/08/2015 11:29	[POST]	no message
17/08/2015 15:29	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - as I mentioned, I love KnitBritish (Louise Scollay) and KarieBookish (Karie Westermann). I also like Susan Crawford - Just Call Me Ruby and Crochet in Paternoster
18/08/2015 21:46	[COMMENT]	Sounds brilliant
19/08/2015 07:34	[POST]	A fun look at hand exercises



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
19/08/2015 09:02	[POST]	Hi ladies - An explanation rather than a question today... I am preparing for some lovely events... I go to Glasgow for the knitting research 'In the Loop 4' conference next week, then off to the stunning north east coast of Scotland for 'Wellbeing by Design' shortly afterwards. October is the big presentation to assessors at my university, to present on WWRG so far November is a conference for the groups which speaks for Fashion and Textiles in higher education.... and I have lots of reading to do! In order to concentrate on fully analysing all the amazing comments you have contributed, I am stepping away from posing a regular question. I'll keep posting of course, especially with new infographics and the word clouds based on each question that give such an interesting overview of the group's views. [NAME] has also kindly agreed to be an additional admin to keep the page running - thanks [NAME]! I'll keep you up to date on all the exciting things happening - let's keep sharing together!
23/08/2015 22:16	[POST]	That's some yarn bomb!
27/08/2015 17:08	[COMMENT]	I think this is such an amazing ixe
27/08/2015 17:08	[COMMENT]	Oops idea
28/08/2015 07:50	[COMMENT]	Inspired to make one of these.... amazing
28/08/2015 13:18	[POST]	no message
28/08/2015 13:27	[POST]	Just watched this at my knitting conference - Finnish film (subtitled). Lovely!
03/09/2015 08:17	[COMMENT]	I love those little pea pod hats!
08/09/2015 20:59	[COMMENT]	Yes, warmth seems to do it. My friend hugs them for a while!
09/09/2015 12:56	[POST]	Quick post while I have signal... A C19th sock knitting machine in a workshop here in northeast Scotland!
13/09/2015 16:52	[COMMENT]	That is amazing work
14/09/2015 10:07	[POST]	A friend just sent me this via Twitter - from The Paris Review. It is beautiful writing!
14/09/2015 13:12	[COMMENT]	I feel I should flag there is some bad language here, but it is a fascinating metaphor
15/09/2015 10:25	[POST]	Inspiration!
15/09/2015 15:51	[POST]	UK-ers (and internet radio-ers) Apparently, Chris Evans' Breakfast Show on Radio 2 tomorrow will be talking yarn-bombing - about 8.40 am!



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
16/09/2015 08:52	[POST]	Morning ladies - after years of being in education, the start of a September term always feels more of a 'new year' than January does. Undergraduates start here next week, and I'm in university today for some meetings: I am planning some first year BA lectures this semester, looking at social, cultural and historical background to changes in fashion. I'm also catching up with my supervisor to chat over what has been a very busy summer. The 'In the Loop' conference was beautiful - not just because it was a group of 'yarny' people, but because of the wonderful response to the paper, based on what you had shared about isolation, feeling connected and how you felt about sharing your making here in the group. Last week I was up near Inverness, feeling very blessed to have a sunshine-filled week near a beautiful beach and in good company with [NAME], who is a member of the group and also doing a PhD - looking at clothing, personhood and dementia. The conference was mainly for other doctoral students in design - I fit loosely in this category, apparently! It was good to meet others (most of them BABIES as far as I was concerned!) who were interested in design and communities. It was run by The Glasgow School of Art Institute of Design Innovation, which is an inspiring group of people. As you know, I am stepping away from the group a little, in order to concentrate on analysing the (5000+) comments and images you have shared. Remember you can always go back to previous questions (new members, search by my name and look for posts on Wednesdays which posed research queries) and you can pose questions or comments about knit, crochet and wellbeing yourself - or ask me to do this for you if you prefer - just PM me). Keep sharing your makes and stories... Finally, I am going to Yarnale on Sunday 27th September - if anyone wants to meet up to say hello or even do a little interview, let me know!
16/09/2015 09:00	[COMMENT]	Sarah Neal on Radio 2 - On about 2.11.40 Talking about yarn-bombing and the ongoing popularity of knitting! <a href="http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b069gc4w">http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b069gc4w</a>
18/09/2015 12:29	[POST]	Yarn bomb bus stop! Lots of Bristol volunteers involved in this project...
19/09/2015 07:05	[COMMENT]	I have really hurt my shoulder, so I am crocheting a cover for a sling... slowly!
24/09/2015 16:55	[COMMENT]	It's that autumn feeling...
25/09/2015 08:04	[POST]	Off to Yarnale - a wool festival in Skipton, UK - with knitting buddies and meeting up with my lovely daughter. Time for some wool fun rather than wool work...
05/10/2015 15:35	[COMMENT]	Love those little peapod shapes...



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
07/10/2015 16:47	[POST]	Hi all - a late post today... Apologies for a bit of radio silence - I have been preparing teaching materials for this semester and generally getting my ducks in a row. Firstly, thanks to the flurry of new members... 26 people have joined recently! We are now nearly 400. Please do complete your details on Google doc (a link on the pinned post at the top of the page or in 'Files') which allows me to track the amazing geographical range of participants. Also, feel free to go back and contribute to any previous research questions... I will again 'bump' these to the top of the page over the next week or so to make this easier. Finally, I have some exciting news for the next stages of the research, where you may become more involved or contribute in different ways... keep your eyes peeled for a post on Friday! Alison
09/10/2015 10:19	[COMMENT]	Well done [NAME] - what an exciting time!
09/10/2015 13:55	[POST]	Happy Friday everyone... Right, some exciting things are afoot for the research in the next year... I have been speaking with my supervisor and we have come up with a few approaches to continue working with Woolly Wellbeing-ers who would like to get more involved. Firstly, let me reassure you that the group will continue as it is now, as a forum for sharing and celebrating your work just as before. I am also going to 'bump' older research questions for newer members to comment on if they wish. I'd like to do some further research with individuals - if you are northern UK based and would like to meet up for an interview, we could do that in person - if you are further afield, including in a different country, you might like to have a go at doing an interview over Skype or Facetime. If you prefer, you might be interested in a journal project we are planning - where you commit to completing a 'Woolly Wellbeing' diary reflecting on your making over a period of time. This could be done online (on a secure document, which only the two of us would see), by email or on paper and shared with me later by post. I am also thinking how wonderful it would be to have a photography exhibition by next autumn - where people take pictures of themselves with their work (faces or just hands!), their work on its own or their places for making. I think images like this, along with a personal story of what wellbeing impact making in knit or crochet has for you, could have a wonderful impact. Have a think about these possibilities and let me know if you'd be interested in participating in any of these ideas - it can be through comments or a direct message if you prefer. Thanks! Alison
09/10/2015 15:11	[COMMENT]	Absolutely, [NAME] - I am starting to plan this out, but will share my drafts, so members can contribute ideas and personalise it
09/10/2015 15:12	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME] - I am studying in Sheffield, staying in Wakefield when I do but imminently moving to Dunfermline area!
09/10/2015 15:12	[COMMENT]	Thanks for inspiring replies already, everyone - my mind is buzzing



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
09/10/2015 22:48	[COMMENT]	Great, [NAME] - sorry to have missed your message before...
10/10/2015 16:03	[POST]	Interesting? For World Mental Health Day
13/10/2015 19:39	[POST]	Had a little tear in my eye!
22/10/2015 09:47	[POST]	Anyone up for this? Yarn + fitness?!
22/10/2015 16:58	[POST]	no message
27/10/2015 10:08	[POST]	Hi all, Sorry for not checking in - we are without internet at the moment, so chances to log on are a bit limited! Hubs and I move to Edinburgh next week, so the house is full of boxes (SO many vac-packs of yarn). I will see you chaps on the other side - in the meantime, do share what you're making! Alison
27/10/2015 14:27	[COMMENT]	I have these beauties in a bag - in theory, it means I can still do Christmas presents before craft space is set up....
27/10/2015 14:32	[COMMENT]	Yup, [NAME] - so cute... they are the main reason for the book purchase!
27/10/2015 16:03	[POST]	no message
30/10/2015 17:00	[COMMENT]	What a top idea
05/11/2015 01:37	[POST]	Just found this via the Lion Brand blog - anyone start out as a new mum knitter?
16/11/2015 09:32	[POST]	Hi all, Thank you for your patience whilst we moved - the trip north of Edinburgh and getting the basics sorted seems to have taken such a long time! In the middle of unpacking, I had to go to a conference at Glasgow School of Art - this was amazing, but I am exhausted! This is my work room - for study and craftiness - in the new flat. My task for today is to get it ready for effective reading, writing and making! For new members (we have had a flurry of newbies - thank you!) please add your details on the google-form you'll find on the pinned post or under 'Files'. For those awaiting info on the journal project, I am preparing a post for Thursday this week (teaching all day Wednesday), so look out for that!
16/11/2015 12:41	[COMMENT]	Welcome, [NAME]
16/11/2015 14:13	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME]
16/11/2015 15:14	[COMMENT]	Thanks - picked this up and happy to help! Let me know on here if you have an update, so I can check the 'other' folder. :)
16/11/2015 20:06	[COMMENT]	Love that wool!
17/11/2015 17:16	[COMMENT]	Thanks [NAME]
22/11/2015 22:04	[COMMENT]	So beautiful



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
27/11/2015 10:03	[POST]	Hi everyone, Just a quick 'holding post' to let you know I am struggling a bit post move and am behind in my WWRG plans! Give me a little longer to get back on track and I will try to reward your lovely patience with journal ideas. In the meantime, keep sharing!
03/12/2015 09:38	[COMMENT]	So cute!
08/12/2015 21:58	[POST]	Popping this here from Karie Westermann's blog
16/12/2015 11:30	[POST]	Hi all, Apologies for radio silence lately... I have been either teaching here at the university (someone decided I could do a seminar series on fashion history?!?) or organising things after moving. I have been neglecting the group and the research in general I am afraid! Just as I am getting a grip, Christmas is upon us, so I am posting a little update for you.... I am still working on the journal - both some graphic work and also designing ways of 'measuring' (not sure if that is even the right word - maybe 'recording') how we feel when we are yarn-making. I want to get this right, so I beg a little more patience. I am in a phase of doing lots of reading (I want to write a section on women's creativity!) but being distracted by knitting socks. Many Christmas makes have been created on the train from Edinburgh to Sheffield. Have a lovely time over the holidays if you are celebrating - I will post again in January as we are escaping to lovely daughter and then on holiday in the wilds of Northumberland to recharge our batteries! Merry Christmas. (picture from 'the ornament girl - check out those patterns!') <a href="http://theornamentgirl.com/blog/behind-the-scenes/some-amazing-handmade-christmas-wreaths/">http://theornamentgirl.com/blog/behind-the-scenes/some-amazing-handmade-christmas-wreaths/</a>
16/12/2015 13:38	[COMMENT]	Thank you [NAME], it is on my to do list for today in fact! Shall I send you a draft before posting?
16/12/2015 13:39	[COMMENT]	Just the comment about the journal in the new year, [NAME]
16/12/2015 14:42	[COMMENT]	Sure, I'll email you to you can check it's what you want. Will probably be Friday afternoon if that's ok?
19/12/2015 00:54	[COMMENT]	Lucky lady & lovely friends
19/12/2015 09:23	[COMMENT]	Superlike
22/12/2015 20:36	[COMMENT]	Sweet!
29/12/2015 16:26	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], had to go away more quickly than expected, so will be this weekend if that's ok?
01/01/2016 14:24	[COMMENT]	Happy New year to you, [NAME]... that's a brilliant commitment and impressive output too!
07/01/2016 12:28	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME] - I am about to start a beanie to keep the chills from my husband's poor head!



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
07/01/2016 12:30	[POST]	Hi everyone and a belated happy new year. I am finally raising my head after the holidays and have some article writing revisions to do before getting stuck back into some reading. I enjoyed making LOADS over the holidays - a beret and socks for me (unusual) lots of socks for others, halfway through a Sooty puppet and nearly finished on a secret sweater! I'll put some pictures below later... what'chya been making lately?
07/01/2016 12:46	[COMMENT]	Impressive! (and love your new profile pic, [NAME])
07/01/2016 14:16	[COMMENT]	*nearly* [NAME]?! Glad to see you are still prepared to sock!
13/01/2016 10:47	[POST]	Happy Wednesday everyone - especially to the flurry of new members recently. It is chilly here in Yorkshire and set to snow by the time I make my weary way back home to Scotland tonight. It has been a while since I posted a new research question but there is one coming your way in a moment...! However, I also wondered if anyone would like me to 'bump' earlier research topics - especially if you are a newbie? Let me know....
13/01/2016 10:56	[COMMENT]	My pleasure - I wil publish on mine too now
13/01/2016 13:01	[COMMENT]	So interesting... (and only women because of this study... don't mean to disparage the chaps!) I have just read something from Rowan Williams, the previous archbishop of Canterbury, who spoke about a desire to be at home in the world... seems to echo a few comments here. Perhaps participants here should be doing Thought for the Day on radio4 instead!
14/01/2016 12:33	[COMMENT]	Bumping this question from July... all new contributions welcome!
15/01/2016 00:04	[POST]	Just read this lovely blog...
19/01/2016 07:41	[COMMENT]	I love socks... it took me a while and now I am unstoppable... be prepared, [NAME]!
28/01/2016 12:37	[COMMENT]	Bumping for new members
01/02/2016 13:08	[COMMENT]	Bumping this question for newer members
01/02/2016 13:09	[COMMENT]	Bumping this question for newer members
01/02/2016 13:12	[COMMENT]	If new members could read and add details, that would be great
03/02/2016 20:00	[COMMENT]	No message
06/02/2016 11:43	[COMMENT]	Love it, [NAME]!
11/02/2016 13:54	[POST]	Casting on a shawl called 'Silence' by Simone Eich. She writes about how the design reflects the 'special kind of silence I only feel when working with yarn'. I found that quite an inspiring idea - anyone else feel this way?
15/02/2016 17:33	[POST]	I do think this is what we are doing! 5 ways to wellbeing





DATE	TYPE	TEXT
17/02/2016 22:01	[POST]	Enjoy! Some of my favourite people on here
18/02/2016 21:13	[COMMENT]	Poops, sorry [NAME] I assumed it might be ok on the interwebs.
23/02/2016 10:46	[COMMENT]	Oh the places you'll go!
23/02/2016 15:38	[COMMENT]	Picture doesn't show, [NAME], sorry
27/02/2016 10:21	[POST]	For anyone in striking distance of Birmingham, Uk...
29/02/2016 14:10	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME]
01/03/2016 09:35	[COMMENT]	A real privilege to hear your thoughts, both here and through messaging - thank you
03/03/2016 21:19	[POST]	How lovely!
08/03/2016 11:23	[POST]	Happy International Women's Day, everyone!
08/03/2016 11:24	[COMMENT]	Love this clip of women working together to create :-)
10/03/2016 22:08	[POST]	Hmmmm, views, my yarny peeps?
11/03/2016 01:53	[COMMENT]	I guess all such articles simplify things. All activity is good if it engages us, including using tech... I don't like that they assume you should ditch one thing for another. Anyhoo, they'll all be grateful for our needle and hooky skills when the power runs out!
18/03/2016 17:22	[POST]	Yup!
28/03/2016 18:09	[COMMENT]	*giggle*
29/03/2016 12:51	[POST]	Hi all - I hope you had a restful Easter break. Hubs and I escaped to north-east Scotland for a much needed few days away. I had been over-working somewhat and got myself pretty exhausted, leading to an impressive / embarrassing faint in the supermarket! I have learnt that this is a bit of a warning for my physical and mental health, so I put on the brakes and stepped away from work for a while. I am edging my way back into work this week, especially as I am FINALLY (!!! oh how slow these university wheels work!!!) ready to share the journaling project. Look out for an exciting post tomorrow if you would like to get involved...
29/03/2016 21:30	[POST]	Thanks for heads up, prompt Woolly Wellbeing-ers. Post removed / member blocked. Fortunately, this happens very little in the group :-)



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
30/03/2016 14:02	[POST]	LAST FEW BOXES AVAILABLE... email me if you are interested this week *Drum Roll* I would like to invite some of you to take part in a different aspect of the research project. The aim is to have a deeper insight into your making / wellbeing / posting over time, rather than the quick responses we share through Facebook. This would be facilitated through a 'Woolly Wellbeing Research Box' (contents a secret for now!) which would support you to reflect on what you are making, how it makes you feel and whether you share this on social media. Options for responses may be completely creative, through a handwritten or electronic journal - it is designed for you to do / not do any of the options suggested. What I'd be asking for is a commitment to - share reflections over 6-8 weeks (you could respond daily, weekly, online in the group or just with me... whatever fits in for you) - return the research box, along with at least one thing you make during this time (I would pay postage) I would be using elements of what you return to me for some presentations about creative ways of engaging people in research, an academic journal article about making & wellbeing and perhaps an exhibition. I have a more detailed information sheet, which I will send to those who are interested... if you decide you'd like to take part, I will then send you one of the boxes. Also, because of the costs involved, I can only send boxes to the first 20 confirmed participants. If you don't want to commit to this, but are interested more generally, I will share some of the approaches on the group later in the summer. If you'd like to know more and receive the information sheet, please email me at [EMAIL] Thanks! (am excited) Alison
30/03/2016 17:22	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME]
30/03/2016 17:23	[COMMENT]	Do email me if you are interested, [NAME]
30/03/2016 17:24	[COMMENT]	I had planned for this, [NAME], so email and I can send you the details to look at further & see if you are happy
30/03/2016 17:25	[COMMENT]	I had planned for this, so have a read of the info tomorrow and let me know if you'd like to do it.
30/03/2016 17:26	[COMMENT]	Thanks for your email, [NAME]
30/03/2016 17:26	[COMMENT]	Pop me your email if you'd like the details, [NAME]
30/03/2016 17:27	[COMMENT]	Pop me your email if you'd like further details, [NAME]
30/03/2016 17:27	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME]
30/03/2016 17:29	[COMMENT]	[NAME] - no problem in posting to Ireland
31/03/2016 12:10	[COMMENT]	Do ping me your email if you are interested, [NAME]
31/03/2016 12:11	[COMMENT]	Thanks - got your email - have budgeted for some far flung post, so should be fine



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
31/03/2016 12:11	[COMMENT]	I am hoping to send some to the US / Canada, so pop me your email address and I'll send you the details for you to consider, [NAME]
31/03/2016 12:12	[COMMENT]	Oh, Bless, [NAME] - I am sorry life is stressful and I hope keeping knitting helps. Do pop me your email address and I'll send you the details
31/03/2016 14:25	[COMMENT]	Bumping this - about 5 more boxes available if anyone else is interested? I have emailed back all those who have contacted me with their email addresses. Thank you!
31/03/2016 20:19	[COMMENT]	It's available if you are interested!
31/03/2016 20:20	[COMMENT]	Just email me as above and I'll send you more details
04/04/2016 18:31	[COMMENT]	I ask my husband to do this too!
04/04/2016 18:53	[COMMENT]	Just reading about this today, [NAME]. What irritates me is that some of the research about social media seems to assume users don't know the risks / security / commercial uses of Facebook etc. Users are intelligent, not naive!
05/04/2016 11:39	[POST]	Silence shawl finished and blocking. I have designated April 'finishing' month, to try and tackle my many projects!
05/04/2016 11:56	[COMMENT]	Bumping for last few boxes
11/04/2016 19:58	[COMMENT]	I love this! Feel inspired to sort out something similar with my MIL and daughter...
11/04/2016 22:53	[POST]	Interesting article...the Australian 'knitting nanas' group on building community, educating and bearing witness. What do you think?
12/04/2016 14:56	[COMMENT]	Yay!
13/04/2016 11:44	[COMMENT]	I am so excited and delighted!
13/04/2016 11:50	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], I had sent out all the boxes made up, but I can rustle up an other for you if you like. I'll email you with the information when I get home tonight.
13/04/2016 11:51	[COMMENT]	Hi [NAME], thanks for your email. I had sent out the boxes, but can make up another for you. I'll send you the information when I get home tonight... Just enough left!
14/04/2016 19:07	[POST]	Has anyone else (in the UK?) seen this month's Knitting magazine? A couple of articles on knitting and wellbeing
14/04/2016 19:14	[COMMENT]	Hope it comes soon for you!
15/04/2016 13:06	[POST]	Our first journal article has been published! I can't share it as a whole because of strict copyright regulations, but I will put the link in the comments to see the introduction
15/04/2016 14:11	[COMMENT]	Yay! Completely up to you, [NAME].
16/04/2016 17:37	[COMMENT]	Yay!
16/04/2016 19:40	[COMMENT]	You go, girl... whatever you want to make with textiles is delightful. Very much about 'making', regardless of format, really. So glad you are inspired



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
18/04/2016 17:56	[COMMENT]	Yay for both [NAME]and [NAME]!
18/04/2016 17:58	[COMMENT]	Looks like the US / Canada post is getting there, though - hopefully not too long to wait
18/04/2016 22:09	[COMMENT]	Fingers crossed
18/04/2016 22:15	[COMMENT]	Huzzah!
18/04/2016 22:15	[COMMENT]	Go, girl!
19/04/2016 12:01	[COMMENT]	Sorry for the delay, I know it is frustrating!
20/04/2016 15:26	[COMMENT]	Brilliant
20/04/2016 15:30	[COMMENT]	It is officially 4 ply, but is a bit thinner in places. It is Yeoman Yarns cashmilion, which is acrylic.
20/04/2016 15:33	[COMMENT]	Glad you are feeling inspired ????
21/04/2016 13:48	[POST]	Hi all, Thanks to all those who volunteered to take part in the 'Reflection Boxes' - they have all arrived or are wending their long way across the globe! For those who missed the postings about this, or who knew they were too committed elsewhere to take part, I thought I could put some of the reflective tasks here on the wider group. Firstly, there has been some fun response to the idea of an image which you'd like to 'identify' you in the research.... no faces, but a hatted head, socked feet, still / working hands, favourite make or a picture of some yarn which represents you in some way... the only limits are your creativity! Share your pictures here!
21/04/2016 14:04	[COMMENT]	Phew! Plenty to have a go at when you get home :)
21/04/2016 14:10	[COMMENT]	Keep forgetting to do this - can't access more than the overview without a university account, sorry! <a href="http://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/intellect/crre/2016/00000007/00000001/art00002">http://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/intellect/crre/2016/00000007/00000001/art00002</a>
22/04/2016 11:33	[COMMENT]	I agree absolutely
23/04/2016 12:46	[POST]	If anyone is in striking distance of Loughborough, UK, this is an excellent exhibition
23/04/2016 12:50	[COMMENT]	Shared on Winwick Sockalong group too. :)
24/04/2016 15:48	[COMMENT]	Sorry, Leicester
24/04/2016 19:45	[COMMENT]	Giant sunflower!
25/04/2016 08:18	[COMMENT]	I think (!), wherever you are commenting from, you click the camera icon in the text box underneath or to the left of where you are typing. On a phone, this should bring up your photos, and on a computer it would let you browse your pictures folder. I guess it depends on how you access Facebook? Not sure how ipads or Macs work.



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
25/04/2016 08:33	[COMMENT]	fab!
25/04/2016 08:34	[COMMENT]	So pleased you have this
26/04/2016 15:07	[COMMENT]	Exciting - I have just bought this for my MIL's birthday
27/04/2016 20:23	[COMMENT]	Lovely, both you ladies
04/05/2016 18:55	[POST]	Most excellent hubs made me laugh today - enabling me in yarny purchases and he said that "it's not just for clothes, it's for your hobby - and apparently it is for your wellbeing, too, so who can argue?"
06/05/2016 08:37	[POST]	Crochet goes digital!
06/05/2016 16:09	[POST]	Well, not enjoying enforced knit / crochet break with tendonitis and worries about carpal tunnel. Any tips out there? I feel so uncomfortable not twiddling with yarn!
06/05/2016 16:24	[COMMENT]	My anaphylactic allergy is to anti inflammatory meds, so no go, unfortunately
06/05/2016 17:44	[COMMENT]	Oof! Sounds like something I need to brave up for! Thanks
06/05/2016 17:45	[COMMENT]	Thanks, [NAME] - I will take myself off to the docs, I think
06/05/2016 20:01	[COMMENT]	Thanks, I have just got some splints, but haven't worn them at night
07/05/2016 21:27	[COMMENT]	Interesting! All my needles are steel.
16/05/2016 01:47	[COMMENT]	My goodness, that looks so exciting!
17/05/2016 08:51	[COMMENT]	My yarn tells me that too... I trust it to help. You are safe.
18/05/2016 20:10	[COMMENT]	Today, I managed to break my left wrist, so no knit / crochet for me for a while! Will try this when I am sorted
25/05/2016 09:53	[COMMENT]	That's a really interesting resource, [NAME]
25/05/2016 11:44	[COMMENT]	I might have a go at that in a while! Lovely daughter off to see Bruce next week too - so lovely as Springsteen seminal in our 80s wooing!
06/06/2016 13:24	[COMMENT]	So lovely!
06/06/2016 20:48	[COMMENT]	Hi flower, was struggling with this concern myself, although nowhere near as badly as you, poor thing. I know quite a few people who have had this done... yes, painful at first, but then transformed afterwards. You probably have been managing low level pain for ages and will feel fab when it's sorted
07/06/2016 09:27	[COMMENT]	Exciting!
07/06/2016 09:28	[COMMENT]	[NAME], have you seen?
07/06/2016 12:35	[COMMENT]	Bless! 2nd cast on, so hoping this will get sorted soon. Hopefully off at the end of the month. Thank you



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
08/06/2016 15:47	[COMMENT]	No knitting for me, so wishing on WIPs by perusing Ravelry... Merinda shawl next
08/06/2016 20:23	[POST]	I contacted the researcher in charge of this project today... Just a small scale study to begin with, but fascinating!
10/06/2016 14:39	[POST]	For those who like listening to podcasts, I have enjoyed listening to this... focus is sewing, but plenty of connections to yarns, I think
13/06/2016 23:08	[COMMENT]	Wow, talented!
15/06/2016 18:43	[COMMENT]	All sorted x
16/06/2016 12:35	[COMMENT]	Lucky you!
20/06/2016 12:43	[POST]	Just wanted to share on here outside the boundaries of the research... I didn't finish the socks I was making for a friend before I broke my wrist. Just heard that the few months expected after withdrawal of chemo is now likely to be a matter of days. Feeling so sad and full of regret at not enough time spent. Hug those you love while you can
21/06/2016 12:17	[COMMENT]	Thanks for kind messages.
22/06/2016 09:41	[POST]	Thanks to those who have sent back - or told me of their plans to send back - the REFLECTION BOXES. I emailed with details about this a little while ago - please message or email if you want to let me know about reimbursing you for postage (happy to do this in advance) or if there is a problem and you can't return it (which is fine - life happens!) Thank you!
22/06/2016 18:40	[COMMENT]	Brilliant - just let me know how much to reimburse you. Excited!
22/06/2016 21:04	[COMMENT]	Oh no! FB is so strange in controlling what we see. Nice to have you back
22/06/2016 21:06	[COMMENT]	Thanks, m'dear - also emailed you re. postage
27/06/2016 13:01	[POST]	Arm cast off today and chatted to a physiotherapist about exercises for my hand. She asked if I had any balls of wool at home to squish... I laughed and laughed!
10/07/2016 08:17	[POST]	[NAME] thank you so much for your reflection box - it is amazing!
10/07/2016 09:34	[COMMENT]	xx I am away this week but can sort Paypal postage reimbursement if you email / DM your details
18/07/2016 11:00	[COMMENT]	These are lovely [NAME] thank you
19/07/2016 16:18	[POST]	Lots of relevance for many of us here (including me! Physio very painful at the mo!)
23/07/2016 21:36	[POST]	Yarns in the museum today! Fibres from the 50s for making tweed for fashion houses National Museum of Scotland Textile Galleries



DATE	TYPE	TEXT
01/08/2016 21:54	[COMMENT]	[NAME] I have nearly completed collecting the data so do scroll through and comment as much as you wish if you would like to contribute to the research (One way you can do this is to use the search box for my name to find the research questions posted over the last year or so). Otherwise, just enjoy being part of the group!
03/08/2016 08:01	[COMMENT]	Love that way of recording your makes
03/08/2016 08:02	[COMMENT]	I have read about this! From sheep to knit - I am looking forward to it
08/08/2016 14:32	[POST]	Hi all - enjoying some family break time here lately. Behind the scenes, I have been struggling with massive influx of bots / spam. One possibility would be to turn the group from 'closed' to 'secret'. this would mean no-one could find the group through searching, but you could still invite friends to join. What do you think? On a similar note, would anyone like to help out by being another admin person?
08/08/2016 14:46	[COMMENT]	Thanks [NAME], I'll add you on
10/08/2016 08:21	[POST]	What a man... It is my silver wedding anniversary and I'm off crafting tonight. I knew he was a keeper.
10/08/2016 14:45	[COMMENT]	This is so inspiring - I am making Shore Hap from her recent book at the mo
18/08/2016 08:15	[POST]	For [NAME] and everyone else who found Kate Davies such an inspiration
21/08/2016 17:53	[COMMENT]	Sounds a lovely response [NAME]
11/09/2016 11:49	[COMMENT]	Love that!
18/09/2016 11:44	[COMMENT]	Scary plague doctor!
20/09/2016 08:47	[POST]	For someone who has been 'quiet' over a challenging summer, this was a great read. Some of you may like it too.... Thank you for all the little boosts prompts on here have provided lately.
03/10/2016 14:07	[POST]	AnxietyUK charity raising funds through this knitting pattern for an alternative Christmas jumper...
20/10/2016 13:48	[COMMENT]	Not sure if it will help but I have switched to clover soft touch hooks - it is a bit counter intuitive as the handle isn't as soft as the knit pro ones, but it has a soft pad for 'pen' holders. Also the hook has a coating which is really sleek so the yarn moves easily. Any other tips out there?
20/10/2016 13:48	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://www.woolwarehouse.co.uk/clover-soft-touch-crochet-hook-0-6mm?gclid=CMaluPXC6c8CFQ88Gwod_CUFyQ">http://www.woolwarehouse.co.uk/clover-soft-touch-crochet-hook-0-6mm?gclid=CMaluPXC6c8CFQ88Gwod_CUFyQ</a>
20/10/2016 15:02	[POST]	For any members in or in reach of London...
22/11/2016 18:31	[COMMENT]	I think tin can Knits are best for basics. Their flax sweater is free and sized from baby to 5xl adult. Will find and pop a link here in a mo
22/11/2016 18:33	[COMMENT]	<a href="http://tincanknits.com/pattern-SC-flax.html">http://tincanknits.com/pattern-SC-flax.html</a> Ta da!
05/12/2016 00:40	[COMMENT]	Bizarre and lovely all in one!





DATE	TYPE	TEXT
08/12/2016 19:27	[POST]	My making for most of the year: honeymoon socks for [NAME] who gets married on Saturday!
11/12/2016 21:03	[COMMENT]	The day went beautifully!
02/01/2017 23:41	[COMMENT]	That's absolutely fine ladies. I did a few posts some time ago explaining that I was stepping back in order to analyse and write up my thesis. Several group members offered to take over extra admin responsibilities. Sorry if you missed those posts. The group is also 'secret' following a few issues with spamming and like all Facebook groups is affected by their algorithms which mean posts drop from your feed if you don't like or post. Thank you for your involvement in everything so far, though. I have appreciated it. Alison
08/01/2017 16:55	[COMMENT]	This is interesting ladies, especially as I am off the hospital tomorrow for assessment of carpal tunnel syndrome and dupuytren's contracture! Still need to craft to keep my head clear even if my hands hurt though... ????
31/01/2017 18:34	[COMMENT]	I too am learning I need different project to give fingers, wrists, shoulders a break in terms of weight and movement
18/03/2017 02:37	[COMMENT]	Best wishes for you [NAME]! Hope crochet keeps you calm through next week
09/04/2017 10:28	[COMMENT]	Love that heel
09/04/2017 16:24	[COMMENT]	Will try it - I am having a go at Vanilla Is the New Black pattern that uses short rows for the heel
18/04/2017 14:16	[POST]	Hi all - not sure if this will pop up in newsfeeds thanks to Facebook algorithms! Just settling in to our new house after the move (again) - it is lovely to feel we are in our own place. Just a reminder - I am currently working on the writing up of my thesis and am not actively promoting research questions - you have already given me tens of thousands of comments to think about! As I finalise the thesis I will be putting some more overviews through word clouds and key points as I draft each section so that you are updated. As always, feel free to keep using the group as it suits you :-). Thanks Alison
18/04/2017 15:07	[COMMENT]	Thank you [NAME] - sitting here knitting in a lounge free from boxes!
18/04/2017 15:32	[COMMENT]	I will be happy to send a pdf of the final thing to anyone who is interested (!) - will post details later but likely to be January-ish
30/04/2017 09:30	[POST]	From The Guardian newspaper in the U.K.



## APPENDIX 5

### PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIERS AND INTERACTIONS

(Number of text-based interactions through posts and comments)

Participant ID	No. Interactions	Participant ID	No. Interactions
GS	328	RP	42
JM	290	JP	40
PG	224	KF	39
DB	168	LB3	38
WP	118	JM3	37
DJ	115	SB	37
AO	102	AW3	36
GC	87	EB	36
MR	84	JD2	35
VH	80	JW	34
MF	74	SR	34
MI	73	JC	33
KC	65	AL2	32
DT	63	KM	31
SK	63	BC2	30
SH	62	PK	29
RL	54	CJ	28
RD	53	JL	28
AN2	52	JT	28
LG	52	JG3	27
CP	51	WL	27
CB	50	EG	26
JM4	50	HB	26
JB	47	TW	26
AD	46	AW4	25
SP	46	CC	25
AF	45	JD	25
JH2	45	CM	23
KB	45	ME	23



Participant ID	No. Interactions	Participant ID	No. Interactions
JS3	43	JS	22
KC2	22	AN4	13
AM2	21	BG	13
AS	21	CR3	13
CP3	21	ED	13
LA	21	NM	13
CR	20	RB	13
RY	20	EW	12
SC	20	IM	12
JB4	19	MM6	12
JS4	19	AW2	11
KS	19	BM	11
BC	18	EC	11
JH	18	SS3	11
LL	18	AN	10
LY	18	KD	10
VB	18	SN	10
CC4	17	AK	9
CW	17	AM5	9
DF	17	CT	9
DS	17	DW	9
HH	17	EP2	9
SS	17	HF	9
KR	16	HW	9
AH2	15	KW3	9
CR2	15	LD	9
EN	15	LS	9
IM2	15	ND	9
KW	15	RC	9
LJ	15	TD	9
SB2	15	AK4	8
SG	15	AM3	8
LB	14	CL	8
AH	13	CL2	8



Participant ID	No. Interactions	Participant ID	No. Interactions
AK3	13	FL	8
JG	8	JS2	5
LB4	8	KL	5
MC	8	LM	5
PG2	8	LM2	5
PL	8	MM5	5
BB	7	MW	5
BE	7	NC	5
CF	7	PR	5
DW2	7	SW	5
JB3	7	AM	4
JD4	7	AS2	4
JN	7	CP2	4
KW4	7	EL	4
MB	7	FD	4
MM3	7	GM	4
TD2	7	HB2	4
VG	7	KV	4
CB3	6	LC	4
CB4	6	MO	4
CC3	6	NC	4
CW2	6	NT	4
GD	6	TB	4
JD5	6	TP	4
PB	6	AC	3
RS	6	AG	3
AA	5	AJ	3
AA2	5	AM4	3
AR	5	AM6	3
CC2	5	AN3	3
CF2	5	AW	3
DC	5	AW5	3
GW	5	BD	3
JD3	5	BH	3



Participant ID	No. Interactions	Participant ID	No. Interactions
JE	5	CB2	3
EM	3	KW2	2
JB2	3	LB2	2
JC3	3	LO	2
JF	3	LS3	2
JL2	3	LT	2
JP2	3	MA	2
KA	3	MC3	2
LF	3	MM2	2
LP	3	MT	2
MP	3	PA	2
SW2	3	RC2	2
TM	3	SK2	2
AH3	2	TB2	2
AL	2	YB	2
AW7	2	AK2	1
CB5	2	AM7	1
CP4	2	AS3	1
CS	2	AW6	1
CT2	2	CC5	1
DE	2	CJ2	1
DI	2	CK	1
EB3	2	EA	1
EC2	2	EB2	1
FS	2	EB4	1
FT	2	EH	1
GS2	2	GS3	1
HG	2	HH2	1
HR	2	HO	1
JC2	2	JW2	1
JG2	2	KM2	1
JH3	2	LC2	1
JM2	2	LK	1
JW3	2	LS2	1



Participant ID	No. Interactions	Participant ID	No. Interactions
KT	2	LW	1
MB2	1	RA	1
MC2	1	RB2	1
MD	1	RH	1
MF2	1	SC2	1
MF2	1	SH2	1
MF3	1	SL	1
MG	1	SM	1
MI2	1	SS2	1
ML	1	TG	1
MM	1	VC	1
MM4	1	VT	1
NH	1	WM	1
NM2	1	WR	1
NW	1	YF	1
PT	1		



## APPENDIX 6

### THANKS TO THE WOMEN WHO ENGAGED IN THE WOOLLY WELLBEING RESEARCH GROUP

*(and who wanted their names associated with the project)*

Ady, Alex, Alexsis, Alisa, Alison, Alison, Alison, Alison, Alliey, Alyson, Amanda, Amanda, ,  
Amber, Amy, Ana, Anastasiya, Andrea, Andrea, Angel, Angie, Anjana, Ann, Ann, Ann,  
Ann, Ann, Anna, Anna, Anna, Annamarie, Anne, Anne, Anne, Anne, Anne, Anne,  
Anneke, Ansie, Arabella, Barbara, Becca, Beja, Betina, Bettina, Betty, Bridgette, Brie,  
Caren, Carla, Carmin, Carol, Carol, Carol, Carole, Caroline, Caron, Catherine, Catherine,  
Cathy, Caz, Chelsea, Cherry, Cheryl, Cheryl, Chris, Chrissy, Christelle, Christiane,  
Christine, Christine, Cindy, Claire, Claire, Claire, Claudia, Claudia, Connie, Danielle,  
Danielle, Danielle, Danielle, Debora, Debra, Diane, Dianna, Donna, Donna, Dulcie,  
Edina, Eileen, Elayne, Elisabeth, Eliz, Elizabeth, Elizabeth, Ellaine, Elonka, Emily, Emma,  
Emma, Erica, Erica, Erin, Faith, Faye, Fleur, France, Gail, Gay, Gemma, Gina, Giselle,  
Giulia, Guylene, Hannah, Hannah, Hanne, Hasmik, Hayley, Hazel, Heidi, Helen, Helen,  
India, Isabelle, Jackie, Jackie, Jacqui, Jacqui, Jacqui, Jan, Jane, Janet, Janey, Jayne, Jean,  
Jean, Jeanette, Jemma, Jemma, Jen, Jennifer, Jennifer, Jenny, Jessica, Jessica, Jill, Jill,  
Jillian, Jo, Jo, Jo, Jo, Joan, Joanne, , Josie, Juanita, Julia, Julie, June, Justine, Karen,  
Karen, Karen, Karen, Kat, Kat, Kate, Kathryn, Katy, Kay, Kellie, Kelly, Kerrie, Kerrie,  
Kismet, Krikit, Kristi, Laura, Laurie, Leana, Lesley, Lesley, Lesley, Liana, Linda, Linda,  
Linda, Linda, Linda, Lindsay, Lisa, Lisa, Lisa, Liz, Lorraine, Luisa, Lynda, Lynette, Lynn,  
Maddy, Mandie, Mandy, Margaret, Maria, Maria, Maria, Marie, Marion, Mary, Mary,  
Maryse, Marysusan, Maura, Megan, Melisa, Michele, Michelle, Michelle, Michelle,  
Miriam, Mitzi, Monica, Monica, Monique, Murphy, Nadia, Naomi, Nat, Neveen, Nick,  
Nicole, Nikki, Pamela, Pamela, Pat, Patricia, Paula, Paula, Petra, Petrea, Raewynne,  
Rangeena, Rebecca, Rebecca, Ree, Rhianna, Ros, Rosie, Ruth, Ruth, Sandra, Sandy,  
Sarah, Sarah, Sarah, Sarah, Sarah, Sarah, Selma, Shani, Sharon, Sharon, Shirley, Sonia,  
Soraya, Stacy, Stephanie, Sue, Susan, Susan, Tara, Taylor, Teresa, Terri, Tommie, Toni,  
Tracey, Tracie, Vicky, Vicky, Victoria, Viki, Viorica, Wendy, Wendy, Wendy, Wendy,  
Yvonne, Zen





## APPENDIX 7

### Participant Information and Consent Documents



**Participant Information Sheet:**  
*Exploring wellbeing in the personal identity  
and collaborative communities of  
yarn-based craftswomen*



You are invited to take part in a research project which is exploring personal and social wellbeing in women who knit or crochet. I am investigating how we feel when we craft alone or connect with others as part of a group. This may be in 'knit and natter' groups, workshops and in online groups.

I am asking you because of your interest in yarn-based crafts – how you take part is very flexible. You might like to attend some workshops I am planning over the next 18 months, where we will talk about some of the issues involved. I will be taking photographs and recording these workshops on a dictaphone, although you can opt out of this using your consent sheet if you prefer. You might also like to become part of the Facebook or Pinterest research groups, where you can post your own images and thoughts about some of the topics.

I will be responsible for keeping all the information you provide on a secure server at Sheffield Hallam University. This will keep all your data safe and confidential. I will have access to the information, along with my dissertation supervisors. All the original information will be destroyed after the research project is completed in the autumn of 2017, although findings from it may be used in other research projects in the future.

The information gathered through interviews, workshops and posts online will be used to write a research 'thesis' – a book-length report which presents the background and philosophy behind the subject, along with an academic study of the ideas and images that participants have contributed. Parts of the research may also be used in presentations at conferences or articles for academic journals. Throughout the study, information will also be used for blog posts on [recoveredththreads.wordpress.com](http://recoveredththreads.wordpress.com), so that you can read how the research is progressing.



All the information that is collected will be kept confidential by the researcher and will not be passed on in any way that means you could be identified through the published or presented research. I will do this by using a coding system for any material used for analysis, such as interviews or questionnaires. However, as we are looking at how yarn-based crafters share online, you need to consider that the Facebook group is closed, so members will see your posts; the Pinterest and blog pages are public. You might, therefore, prefer to choose a confidential 'crafty' name for submitting posts online.

The study is likely to last until September 2017. There will be workshop events running from early summer 2015 up to spring 2017. Throughout this time you can contribute online through the research group Facebook and Pinterest pages and keep up to date with what is happening.

When it is complete, the research will be published as a PhD thesis and will be available through the Sheffield Hallam University library. Results will also continue to be available in a more accessible form through the research group Facebook and Pinterest pages as well as the research blog on [recoveredthreads.wordpress.com](http://recoveredthreads.wordpress.com).

Being involved is completely voluntary and you can decide to withdraw or to change your mind at any point during the project. Taking part (or not) won't affect how you are viewed in any way. You won't be paid or have any other 'encouragements' to do this, although I do hope that you will find it an interesting and valuable experience.

Please ask if you have any questions about what I am doing – now or later on in the research project. You can contact me at [recoveredthreads@miskatonic.co.uk](mailto:recoveredthreads@miskatonic.co.uk) or my supervisor, Dr. [Gwilt](mailto:a.gwilt@shu.ac.uk), at [a.gwilt@shu.ac.uk](mailto:a.gwilt@shu.ac.uk). If you have any concerns about this study or the way that you have been approached, please contact the Sheffield Hallam University (ACES) Ethics Committee at [acesfrec.shu.ac.uk](mailto:acesfrec.shu.ac.uk).

Alison Mayne  
Sheffield Hallam University



**Participant Consent Form:**  
***Exploring wellbeing in the personal identity***  
***and collaborative communities of***  
***yarn-based craftswomen***



⊞ Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

- |  | YES                      | NO                       |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and have had details of the study explained to me.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point.  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

□

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Name (Printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact details: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name (Printed): Alison Mayne

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's contact details:

Alison Mayne, c/o ACES Room 9104, Cantor Building, 153 Arundel Street, Sheffield, S1 2NU  
[MOBILE TELEPHONE]



## APPENDIX 8

### Text to Guard Against Trolling Behaviours

#### **Pinned group post**

Thank you! If you'd like to participate in the Woolly Wellbeing Research project, you'll need to read the Participant Information document in 'Files' and then complete this consent form: [\[LINK TO CONSENT FORM\]](#). This is so I know you are informed about the project and how your posts could be used.

You are contributing to a PhD research project into the ways women share their knit and crochet online. Do you post to ask for advice or to show images of what you have made? Does it help you manage feeling lonely or to connect with other crafter-friends? Lots of these questions will be the topic of posts as we share together.

Please bear in mind that this group needs to operate under university ethical guidelines for research. As such, can I ask you to please refrain from posting links which advertise, promote, discount, etc.

This is a supportive community, contributing ideas about wellbeing for research and we all need to protect and care for one another. Therefore, please note that any comments that are trolling, unpleasant or mean will be deleted and the member removed from the group.

#### **Additional post**

I have written a blog post about some of the reservations I have about the threat of trolling on this page... Read if you wish - your comments about trolling on yarny pages are welcome... Alison [\[LINK TO TROLLING POST\]](#)

#### **[Newbieresearcher.wordpress.com](#) blogpost 16.2.15**

No Trolls Allowed?

I was fortunate enough to hear Sarat Maharaj of Lund University (and previously of Goldsmiths) speak recently about art, textiles and knowledge production at the Cultural Threads Symposium at Central St Martins. Included in his 'haberdashery of ideas' was the Norwegian concept of the troll as curious and observant – a challenge to



the comfortable status quo. This, of course, is in contrast to the image of the faceless, vindictive troll we have seen in social media news from Mary Beard [LINK] and Caroline Criado-Perez [LINK] to Gamergate [LINK].

It gave me pause to reflect as I have just launched the Facebook element of my research into amateur knit and crochet makers who engage as communities both ‘in real life’ and online. Crafty people are generous, welcoming, affirming and full of admiration for the skills of others. Crafty people are also – well, people... which means some can be thoughtless, mean, narcissistic and vindictive. Trolling on Facebook has affected Attic24 [LINK] (which I wrote about here [LINK]) and more recently the ‘Crochet-Along’ efforts of Dedri Uys [LINK] and Kimberley Slifer [LINK]. The generous designers – offering free their skills, patterns and time – were broadsided by vitriolic posts which almost brought the 20-week schedule to an early close. Similarly, the inventor and sole Facebook manager of the ‘Big Comic Relief Crafternoon’ [LINK] found it necessary to post that she was stepping away from the site temporarily as the trolling posts were too distressing to manage.

Why trolling happens at all is a much bigger conversation than can be had here. The thoughtlessness or sheer horrid wounding involved has something to do with the protection offered by the screen. Yet it is not faceless... people’s avatars, images and names are associated with these postings – observed by strangers and ‘friends’ alike.

A colleague has tried to assuage my concerns by pointing out that any potential trolling in my research group is of academic interest: A pragmatic, detached approach can be taken where I analyse the motivation, message and impact of a negative post. However, this project is about wellbeing and community. There is more at stake than my role as a researcher. I have a moral and ethical obligation to participants that I will protect them from harm.

And so... in these early stages, there is a light touch reminder in the welcoming pinned post about support and positivity. However, there is a draft ready to go regarding a zero-tolerance approach to trolling: Posts will be deleted, posters will removed from the group without debate. I have engaged some trusted friends with ‘Admin’ permissions to help monitor this. It may well mean ‘missing’ some points for research, but protection trumps all.



With these measures in place, I begin this aspect of my research with a hopeful heart.

If you are interested in participating in the research group, the details are here [\[LINK\]](#) – please feel free to share.

No trolls allowed.



















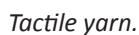


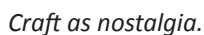


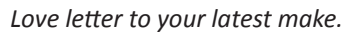












*Trading privacy for connection.*

LXX







## APPENDIX 10a

### Expanded Illustrative Evidence - Text

Expanded illustrative evidence for Chapter 4 – Presentation of findings.

#### 4.2 WHAT WELLBEING MEANS

Being well and well being, the same thing, right? Or not? One is a state, a noun, well being, the other is the process or act of being well, a verb. Wellbeing occurs when one is at ease in their current situation and has no fear of the future. The 'ease' is broad in definition, it is in the mind and the body as well as in those we love. We have just enough to do and can manage our needs easily with manageable stress. (AO)

well being=peace with oneself, compassion for others, and the desire/ability to transform circumstances to peaceful and compassionate events. Transformation can be through crafting, meditation, reading, music or other creative outlet. (LG)

For me wellbeing is about being relaxed ...enough time for friends, family and self with a manageable to do list and work left at work ... Crochet helps me through time for myself with friends ... Making things for friends and family and enjoying the giving and getting the personal benefit of achieving something x (CR)

Wellbeing= being loved, feeling safe, happy, having enough hours in the day to make sure everyone is taken care of, even if I'm put on the back burner...I feel good making sure they feel good! (RD)

For me personally it is a bit of nostalgia as it is something I learned from dear family members who are no longer here with me, a bit of practicality as I am able to make what I want, a bit of fun as all of my creations end up as gifts & I love to see the reaction of the person I give it to. The one thing that I have learned over the many years I have been crocheting is that it is yes my hobby, my creative outlet that gives me a great sense of accomplishment & satisfaction that I completed a project. but it is my "reality break" and I find it very therapeutic. In a previous question you queried and another participant responded with "when my hands are busy my mind is quiet". That statement quantified what crochet is for me. (AW3)



my well being is a settling of the chaos and mind rants that comes with day to day things and knitting, crocheting calms those things and puts me in a better state of well being. (JG3)

That's wellbeing for me: being free from demons (intending anxiety, difficult thoughts, act). When I crochet I forget all my demons. (AM3)

for me it has gone from that to a balancing of my thoughts and emotions, being able to stand out and say I am not just the little wife, or the sister who could sew, or the daughter who provided all the baby blankets so Mom could give them away, I have found that in the past few years it has become my way of saying Hey I still exist, I may be down, I am not providing because of my disabilities but that does not mean bury me, there is still a lot of beauty to me (KC)

## 4.3 SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

### 4.3.1 Making and Sharing on Facebook™

You look at your work and not at the person, deep talks are less intimidating with less eye contact (JH2)

it's less about the art itself, and more what the act of crafting does for the conversational space. When everyone has their own work that they can turn their eyes/attention to when they feel like it, the conversation feels less intimidating than simply sitting in a circle, looking at one another (HB)

a fantastic community all very encouraging and positive, it helped me get through some very painful and lonely times. last august my brother committed suicide and the crochet was there again to keep my mind occupied rather than dwell on terrible thoughts. it's still helping me. i cant always finish what i make but switching to crochet mode has really saved me from insanity and i have something positive to put on facebook rather than being miserable all the time (JP)

This is the first time I have shared anything over the internet about my crafting, I have shared with the groups I work with but don't normally feel comfortable with the internet but I felt moved by what everyone in this group is sharing (SG)



I don't have many real life friends. I live very isolated geographically and emotionally.  
(DB)

I like the freedom to participate when I want or feel like it. I suffer from anxiety and being able to do things in my own time frame helps me manage some of those feelings. One thing I do need though is community and the FB group has given me that in a way I can manage. (AM5)

I also find that I am not defined by my illness in [Facebook group]. I am not even defined by my sock because I am still knitting it. I am define by my desire to knit socks  
(WL)

There is definitely a sense of connection that I am getting even simply joining this group ... I gain insight into others, again a sense of connection and inspiration. It is inspiring to see the work of other artists, hear/ read the stories behind them as well as how people learned to do these crafts ... Yay for making alone, my focus is more focused and yay for the inspiration that comes in a group. (AM2)

#### 4.3.2 Connection through shared interest

I suppose over all, having thought about what I have written, it is the sharing of ideas and projects with like-minded people that I enjoy most. Feeling connected in that we have a common interest (PK)

None of my friends crochet so have no interest in wool or stitches!! The crochet world I have joined is amazing and the support is just the best ... It has certainly helped me to keep busy and feel part of a community. Now there are not enough hours in the day to make all projects I would like to do. I love to see what others achieve, the possibilities are endless. (AH2)

None of my friends or family knit or sew so although they admire and appreciate what I make they don't understand the work involved so a like or nice comment from a fellow maker who understands means a lot (LY)

I also love that I feel a sense of community online that I don't get in my neighborhood. ...Online I can post things and even if I don't know someone, I feel connected to them when they 'like' or comment on my posts (ME)





You get a real sense of achievement from posting your work. If you are proud of what you have made then you want to share it with others - it puts me on a real high when I get lovely comments and likes (JD)

Because of the nature of my job, self-employed, I am alone most of the time. It is only through the groups that I belong to on Facebook that I gain some sense of "belonging" .... One of the other advantages of belonging to these online groups is the sense of accomplishment. The other members spur me on to create nicer things than I would have done before, they teach and guide me, they seek my advice, and there is an overall sense of "well-being" when one is connected (MI)

Thanks ladies! I knew if I posted here I'd get a boost of encouragement. (AA2)

#### 4.3.3 Connections with family members

Both my mother & maternal grandmother were creative my mum was good at knitting, her mother had worked as a milliner... I inherited lots of bits & pieces - a lovely dolly for 'bobbin knitting', weavers' needles, crochet hooks etc so I was always surrounded by the stuff of textiles. When my mum died in 2011 I took possession of her bits & bobs, yarn, needles, buttons & lots of other paraphernalia... so now I am the keeper of the family collection (JB)

I started knitting because I had the desire - THEN I found myself remembering my Mom (who died over 25 years ago) teaching me to knit when I was little. I found myself wishing I had her knitting needles. I learned to crochet because I wanted - I NEEDED to feel more connected to my Mom and to my Grandmother after I was diagnosed with cancer (WL)

At the time I didn't realize how important that time together was. I remember them by crocheting & knitting and very much miss the time I had with them. It brings a sense of nostalgia that I can remember them and will be forever grateful for passing their skills & knowledge to me as well as encouraging my creativity (AM3)

My mum taught me to knit but she always treated dressmaking and knitting as a necessity (we didn't have much money so she made our clothes) and so I didn't keep it up, and was overjoyed to get out of homemade and into shop-bought clothes. When I



went back to it a few years ago I was able to open her eyes to all the patterns and yarns that were now available so she's taken it up again and often comes to me for help with pattern instructions (AM6)

My bond is with my Mum, in that we share a love of crafting... as she gets older, I now find she turns to me for help as the more complicated patterns get the better of her, and we spend many a happy time together ... so the bond continues (KC)

As a side benefit I find the process makes me slow down, almost pause my hectic life which, in turn is a little like time travelling. I feel connected to past generations through the rhythm of the repeated actions, knowing that my Mum, Nanny, Great Nan must have used the same actions. I also love that those who watch me hook and my fellow crafters can see the time and care involved in creating a handmade item, and so it also brings an appreciation of the craft and the finished item. Not wool related, but I get a similar feeling when making apple crumble - the rubbing motion used to make the flour and butter into bread crumbs takes me straight to my Nanny's kitchen (MF)

## 4.4 AGENCY

### 4.4.1 Being agentic in finding ways to comfort the self

Love crochet because the possibilities are endless and I can be in another zone while crocheting and usually finish feeling very creative and successful. Hugh distraction from worries of life (AH2)

I liked the gentle rhythmic movement which was soothing. I also like the way it made me feel that I was achieving something positive, in the items I made. When at my best, I enjoyed the challenge and the way that following a pattern was tricky enough to make me concentrate solely on that, and forget about my other worries. Sometimes, it was the only thing I did that was involved enough and non-threatening enough to keep



me calm and relaxed. It brought my anxiety levels and heart rate down, and slowed my breathing. At my worst, just row after row of stocking stitch was all I could manage, but using a self-variegating yarn I could make useful scarves/blanket squares and still feel happy with my achievements. (PK)

I'd also say that as a busy mum sitting down to crochet or knit is my pure indulgent me time where I can switch off and lose myself in the process. (SB)

I enjoyed not know where I was going with it, just 'being' in the moment, enjoying each stitch just focusing on 'now'. Mindfulness personified :- ) I'm learning so much :- ) (CJ)

the world can actually momentarily cease to exist when the wool and pattern work in harmony! (GC)

It's the rhythm of my hands that does it for me ... by keeping your hands occupied, the monkey mind is busy focussing on what your hands are doing and that lets you relax. We're sociable beings, we like to chat but sometimes we get in our own way and doing something practical helps to stop that. (CP)

but the simple act of working with my hands is soothing to me. If I'm frustrated about something, that is when I find myself reaching for a basic, repetitious pattern where my hands seem to go through the motions without conscious thought (PG)

The feel of the yarn is important too, smoothly runs through my fingers so as not to distract me from the cocentration of knitting. Getting into a rhythm brings peace whilst concentrating on a pattern usually stops a monkey mind. (AL2)

I find that the rhythm of knitting is what I use to calm me down after a rough day or just when I feel like being quiet. ... I like to work with soft yarns as the feel of them calms me down too. (SG)

the reliable rhythm of the stitches and the feel of the lovely delicious soft yarn that comforts me when my days are snag-full. (AO)

When I knit I am working with my hands and that's an antidote to the modern world of electronic media and stuff you can't touch. (JB3)



I love the feel of a super soft yarn and it can be very comforting. What I find the most comforting is taking a piece of yarn and creating something beautiful with it. There is just this overwhelming feeling of peace and accomplishment afterwards or even during. (EB)

I think there is also an element of holding onto something, like a comfort blanket. Therefore you don't need to actually be crocheting. Crocheting is meditative for me - stills my mind (VB)

#### *4.4.4.1 Deliberate acts of self-care*

Crocheting is meditative and allows me to move my mind to peaceful, beautiful musings. No mobility issues, no pain there... Crochet is a form of meditation/medication for me. It moves the focus of my mind to something else. It allows me to manage most pain to a moderate level and management keeps pain from escalating. Depression, pain at hip replacement sites, spinal stenosis, riddled with arthritis (side effect of surviving chemo), and, when I am particularly lucky, it slows/halts migraine development. Also works on arthritis in hands and wrists. (LG)

The result is instant. As soon as I start to hook a peace comes over me and blocks destructive thoughts. The effect is long lasting. (JB4)

It gives me a feeling of accomplishment when so much else in my life is out of control. (DS)

I was at a very low point in life ... rubbing my knuckles to the point of hurting. My husband suggested knitting or crocheting to keep my hands busy ... I love it! It gives me something to do with my hands, relaxes me, gives me something to focus on, allows me to be creative and I just love the sense of accomplishment seeing a project coming along. No matter what is going on that is out of my control I can control the crochet (DS)

I am even more glad at this moment in my life that crochet is and has been a wonderful pastime for half a century, as I am now recently diagnosed with cancer. I foresee that my love of crochet will be an even greater companion over the next many weeks and months of treatments. (KM)



My therapy for the day... This WIP represents an escape, mindless rows now of repetition to ease the pain of a lost love. It will warm and cuddle a newborn but for every stitch it's the memory of my own babe, 38 years ago today. (GS)

After my dad died last year, crochet gave me the head space to think and mourn. I cried a lot but it was therapeutic. Other activities like reading or internet would have stopped me from having that thinking time. (SR)

#### *4.4.1.2 Self-identified therapy*

Life is a struggle at the moment, I've been trying to perfect making pretty tops, concentrating on getting it just right helps keep the demons out. Thank goodness for crochet :) (JP)

I suffer from some pretty severe bouts of depression. I've found when I'm crocheting, especially if I'm trying to design something new, all of my focus goes into that, there isn't room for the depression. Also when I finish something that I've created it's a pretty good high, emotionally. (DW2)

a realisation that without the simple pleasures and mindfulness crafts bring me, that I would be spending a fortune on therapy rather than supplies (MB)

My sweet sister refilled my "meds" for my birthday! (JM)

LOL... this puts a whole new meaning to self medicating (KB)

The best sort of 'medication' (PK)

Some of my "medicine" I am an unmedicated bipolar lady so this is how I channel my swings. (BG)

I found sitting crocheting and knitting help so much. I don't have so much time to think the bad thoughts, love the sense of achievement it brings and I feel I am contributing to carrying on a wonderful tradition. Don't get me wrong, I still get the bad days, and it isn't just the craft that's helped, BUT it has played a big part in keeping me sane! (RL)

If yarn could speak, it would tell me to hang on, once more. Anxiety and suicidal thoughts are everywhere inside my head and I'm honestly tired. But yarn (knitting at



the mo) helps me to focus on something else entirely and forget about all that for a while... I suffer from social anxiety disorder, and suffered from depression and ocd for a while. I also have an eating disorder. Knitting and crochet have truly saved me - My life was going downhill by the time I was 19. Crafting keeps my mind sane, it helps me in so many ways. (BC2)e

#### 4.4.2 Gifting and giving

##### 4.4.2.1 Activism

I certainly hate it when people look at me like I am a little woman because I knit - and I love the things like the knitted bombs that deliberately set out to subvert people's view of women who knit. (RP)

I love a bit of yarnbombing! It lifts the soul and, mostly, brings a smile to people's faces ... I think all have great value for both the person creating and the majority of those partaking! (MF)

I think it can lighten a mood, or brighten a day. Imagine if a yarn bombed bridge actually lightened someone's mood so much that they decided that not to end their life today ... I think all in all the crafting community in general seem to be a warm, giving bunch who like to use their talents to benefit others if possible (MR)

We actually have a group [place] Yarn Bombers dedicated to designing and installing, anonymously. I'm not a member but I know the founder of the group so I frequently donate UFOs or items they need for a specific project. Although the public doesn't know my contribution, I still get a great feeling of satisfaction and appreciation seeing my handiwork used to make the people smile. (GS)

##### 4.4.2.2 Making for charity

I make prem baby hats and blankets and take them to my local neonatal unit where both my sons started out ... Quiet social [activism] I guess sums me up (CR)

I guess we are "stealth charity knitters"! lol, I don't need the hoopla or fanfare and would much prefer to be lowkey about it than toot my own horn (SP)



Crocheting for charity helps me. I concentrate on someone else, and it gets me out of my own head. Depression, backache, headache go to the background for a bit. (KR)

I find knitting and crochet help take my mind off my chronic pain. Knitting for charity and friends makes me feel better and that I am still useful. (WP)

I try to knit individual, thoughtful things. I only knit for people who I think "understand" (the love, thought and time that's gone into it). So I knitted for my local big issue seller but not for my sister (not sure what that says about me!) I think its a nurturing thing and can compare it also to my love of cooking and feeding people, if that makes any sense at all? (CT)

It gives me such a warm feeling to think a baby might be getting cozy with something I made (BC2)

It is very comforting, and when I am done, I have something to pass on to someone else, and hope they feel comfort from my effort. When I make a blanket for a baby, I always "rock" it and sing it two songs before I give it so it has love already in it. (KR)

Been secluded in my world of Hats, Beanies and Bonnets. Fingers, joints and muscles are sore and achy but I LOVE it! After 50 yrs in the work force, catering to the publics needs and wants, I'm finally able to fulfill my own and at the same time, provide a little cuteness and comfort. (GS)

#### *4.4.2.3 Making for loved ones*

So I suppose it fulfils some kind of need to make other people feel wanted and loved and that they matter. (MR)

Because all those hours creating for someone else is a true act of selflessness. What better way to show you care? (CF2)

Because it proves you were thinking of them and a little of you goes with it ????? (JS)

I never knit for myself, I have every intention of it but usually end up giving it away. I knit for my daughter and grandkids when they little and now I knit for friends and charity ... I like other people to feel like I love them and they matter to me. (DT)





Also I almost always am knitting something for a particular person (grandchild, friend, daughter, etc) and so I tend to instinctively feel more connected to that person and find myself in prayer for them while knitting their item. So that increases my happiness (SP)

I love knitting for my grandchildren. They live down south and I'm up north, so I see too little of them. Each garment is chosen for their character and has love in each stitch. It brings me happiness as I knit knowing that each time it's worn a granny hug goes with it x (AL)

I got pre.g.nant at 16 and in those days you had to hand the baby over with a full layette of clothes when they were adopted, so those were the first proper things I knitted. It is 45 years today since my son was born and each thing I have knitted since reminds me of him. (JN)

Made this for my sister who has been going through the ringer lately. It brightened her day and hearing the smile in her voice warmed my heart and helped with my own healing. (CR2)

#### *4.4.3.4 Making for the Self*

Make it for your bed. The colours are so you ... We get so bogged down in making for others. Make it for yourself ??? (JM3)

How this impacts on my well-being? I am compelled to make stuff, & it's 'me time' when I'm doing it, otherwise it's just a round of cleaning, cooking, doing the laundry day in day out. (JB)

I'd certainly agree that knitting/crocheting can be an expression of yourself and some of us do like the surprise we cause because people think that only "grannies" knit, but for me, knitting is a very personal thing and I don't really care what other people think. I like the meditation of it all, the pleasure that buying and using the yarn brings and the sense of self-satisfaction at a job well done when I've got something wonderful and unique to wear. (CP)

If we are creative beings, why should [we] be ashamed? I think as women, that we are taught that being mothers, homemakers, artists, crafters ... is somehow not as good or not important enough to be respected. I have had to fight this my entire life. I have



overcome this, for the most part. But it has taken a lifetime to gain this strength. I just hope that we can help each other be strong, be proud, and keep collecting what we need to do our craft and find JOY from it. We all need JOY in our lives, and it is different for each of us. (LB)

I have a concern that the adage "do something!" drilled into female children is not the be.g.inning. Are "we" taught it is best to do something (useful) as opposed to nothing. When "we" knit/crochet/craft in the name of charity is that "something"? O/wise would/do we feel we make no contribution when sans a career (that makes big-ish money? ... it is a troubling notion. several family members are financially well off. Me, not so much. It is difficult to feel "worthy" when society seems to value financial worth. I was the artsy type, and academics. career, purpose, etc. escaped me as solid concepts to follow. I was told over and over "fine something to do" "... do something". (LG)

#### 4.4.3 Learning and creativity

##### *4.4.3.1 Seeking and giving advice*

Could anyone recommend crochet hooks which ease the hand pain when crocheting? I find the soft bit between my thumb and finger gets very painful and I also get a sort of "crochet hook elbow" pain in my arm. It's making me so sad and I can't cheer myself up by sitting down and creating something woolly as I usually do! (AR)

CALs? KALs? WIPs? Frogs? Subbed? There's a language here that I'm struggling to understand. Sorry, feeling a bit tetchy today (JB)

Pour A big spoon full of sugar and a bit of olive oil in your hand. Rub all over your hands especially around your fingertips. Rinse with hot water. It exfoliate and moisture all in one. And your skin feels like silk afterwards. And it is almost free. (AW7)

Sounds like your tension was too tight .... you should try a bigger hook then. (AW4)



The basket weave does make it a little complicated. Have you considered working in rows on one side (continuing the basket weave stitch pattern) and making a loop on the end of the flap for a button that you could just affix to the front? (CW2)

Don't be afraid to ask something [name]. That is how we learn! (MI)

Just go with it. The best things come from the learning curve! Fill the centre square with crochet flowers. Turn the whole thing into a garden. There's no such thing as a fail. Its just a wip! :- ) (JB4)

Really, it looks like it could be a "mistake that worked", kind of like storybook construction or the purposefully askew cakes and other things I've seen. Really the tilt adds a bit of whimsy to it. (AM2)

Well, keep at it girl! My motto... If at first you don't succeed..... Pick up those needles and try again! ????? (GS)

#### *4.4.3.3 Joy in learning*

I knit and crochet for enjoyment and the challenge of learning something new. (AM5)

It makes me happy to make for family and if people like or think it is clever that makes me happy. I do feel as if in some way my identity is tied up with being a knitter (and sewer ) it's what people know me for when people say oh I couldn't do that I don't have time skill or patience it tells me that they identify me as being someone who does have these things and I guess that is how I self define. (LB3)

When people first asked me why I crocheted I used say it's just a type of mathematics. Lots of ones and zeros! I hadn't realised that was so true ????? (SH)

There is so much maths in crochet! It has been a wonderful way into explaining geometry to my kids. (SR)

I have recently joined my first KAL on facebook. I decided to try a new project and thought the support and advice would be useful ... It has been a great experience- I got advice on a query I had and it's been great seeing everyone's projects. (CP4)



I joined the [name] CAL as a newbie. I've crocheted, knitted, sewed all my life but have never joined a group like this before. I'm enjoying the project, making something different in colours I wouldn't have chosen. It's also amazing to see people from all over the world participating with the wonders of the Internet. (HB2)

I'm in the process of another CAL ... but it's very casual. I like the joy in everyone sharing the pleasure of stitching something beautiful at the same time. I love seeing everyone get excited about creating. It feels like we're all doing it together. :) (IM)

#### *4.4.3.4 Using time productively*

Oh, and knitting results in something tangible for your time... My iDevice usually makes me wonder where the day went after accomplishing nothing. (DB)

I crochet anywhere, especially when I have a bit of a wait for something. Much better than hauling out the cellphone and playing a mindless game! Great to feel productive... (CB3)

While most of the country seemed to spend last Sunday glued to the boob tube watching big men in tight pants run into each other, I spent it making this hobo bag in a bulky yarn that was in a Goodwill stash (PG)

I knit on the train - wouldn't get anything done otherwise (I commute for 2 hours a day). I don't feel awkward about it - more smug that I'm using my time well. I've had people stare (always men, especially if I'm knitting on 4 dpns) and one very rude girl took a photo of me but otherwise most people don't say anything. (AM6)

I like to crochet on the subway. It is pretty relaxing. Although I do crochet at work here and there and it is where I feel most productive haha! (I wonder why..) and where I tend to get my best results. (AN)

Anywhere I'm waiting with nothing to do. I take some medications which make sitting and listening or just sitting difficult. I will generally fall asleep. I knit/crochet in church, in the car, waiting rooms, in front of the TV, train stations... Anywhere im waiting for any length of time. That's the reason I aleays have two different projects in my purse. They are easy, mindless and I can work on them without looking at them for the most part, so I don't look like I'm ignoring what's going on around me. And I'm not. I'm



listening, learning, paying attention, I just need to have my hands busy. The brain learns better when part of it is engaged in some way. So I'm good with it. (DB)

crocheting and knitting makes me feel like I'm doing something worthwhile and can give these things I make as gifts to people I love or a charity and it gives me a useful feeling. My family is gone, and have their own families and are busy and I live alone and am on SSI and Social Security ... at least this gives me something to do that's productive! ... I think that these crafting hobbies are a great thing for people like me especially to have to do, gives us a 'place' in the world! (JD2)

Finally finished! Blanket, border and all... [name] loves it too. Took forever to find my CroJo and be able to pick this up and finish (put it down while bedside during my father's passing finally realized he'd have expected me to finish it with pride) (JM)

I've lost so much in my illness. Knitting proves the I CAN do something. Something useful and beautiful (SS3)

#### 4.4.1 Creativity

##### *4.4.4.1 Beauty in colour*

pick your creative outlet .... Taking sticks and string, or paint and canvas, thread and fabric and creating something uses a different part of your brain. From the time we were living in caves we wanted out caves to have beautiful things in them. (DB)

I believe people get involved in creative arts because they have a story to tell something inside of them that they need to get out. Sometimes the story is simply, "Look at this beautiful color, and look at the shape I've made with it". Sometimes the story is "I love you and I want to wrap you in rainbow colors and warmth." Sometimes it just feels good sometimes a line, a pattern can weave itself into your soul, making you want to see it, touch it, create it again and again and again. (WL)

I'm very sensory and love different colours, textures and patterns. I embellish, alter patterns and love freeform. I love recycled sari yarn and Noro for their unique qualities (TD)



I've been thinking about this today and I've realised that I actually use a lot of self striping yarns. I thought it was because they are always lovely to touch but I think it also stops me getting bored of a project. I'm making a scarf at the moment (despite the warm weather) and I find myself thinking, just one more row then I can see what the new colour looks like (SG)

When I start a new project and it calls for me to 'be creative with the colour', I prepare myself to get annoyed for a day or so. I absolutely love working with different colours, but the act of putting some together to create 'the perfect' combination for me is stressful and I will unpick my work several times, swearing at and then throwing the wrong balls of wool at the wall in frustration when they don't 'go together'. However, when I finally get the right combination, then it's very calming. (DJ)

I can smell green and the bright 'jucy' greens always wake me up. (AO)

Hi [name] you hear colours I can smell and see a colour. Lily of the Valley is purple and purple is a harsh colour that gives me indigestion ... what colours do you hear loudest? (AL2)

Colour lifts my soul and some days makes it sing! ... Sometimes I almost hear colours. This happened with lime green a few years ago and I currently feel/hear/see more colour when u see bright red next to bright pink. It zings! (MF)

Il started a FB page to share only FREE patterns AND Free patterns that I altered, always giving the original link along with a .doc or .pdf showing my changes and/or modifications. Sometimes I will use 2 or 3 patterns to incorporate a new project so I always share them. If someone sees how I finished the item and wants to duplicate, I will always share the "altered" pattern. I feel it's my way of paying it forward to all those who love to knit and crochet. (GS)

I like to pass on patterns or links to free patterns to fellow knitters if I imagine they will like them and want inspiration from them. I also would send a link to a paid pattern or give a designer's name to them if I think they will love their style. I guess I feel like I have a friendship with these people and as such would want them to have access to anything that can bring them joy, either from the wearing or the learning. (LM2)



Having made the decision to share my sock patterns for free, I like the fact that someone will take the pattern and make it so that it fits them perfectly. I enjoy watching the process of someone making the adaptations because I know that the process and the resulting socks will give the other knitter so much pleasure. I think the pleasure of sharing a pattern is knowing that you are giving someone a gift which will make them or somebody else happy - it's a win/win situation! (CP)

#### *4.4.4.3 Creativity and 'painting with yarn*

I definitely prefer color and colorful. I like detail, and I seek difficulty and intricacy in patterns as I want to be challenged as much as possible, as often as possible in what I choose to make. My goal is to one day 'paint' with yarn. (KM)

Creativity comes out of need...we need to cover our babies, we need to take a hot pot off the stove and we need to recycle old to make new ( ripping old clothes to make rags, rugs or new clothes!) ... I do think woman are more creative with softer materials (RD)

I believe we all have creativity in us and it can often take several attempts to find out what stirs your own creativity. Although it is often laughed at I think that women have an inbuilt NEED to create things. Whether that is food, clothes, handicrafts, homes, children or gardens. But once you find your creativity it is hard to hide it and we want to express it. This should be saluted rather than suppressed ... I also believe that women have for ever grouped together to create, whether to cook or sew or look after their children. This grouping together empowers them and feeds their creativity because they encourage each other. Long may this continue. (SH)

I think women's creativity came out of necessity. From a need for warmth, to clothe. If you look back through history you will find the origins of our crafts not to design or beautify but for the NEED ... Now, we take those simple 'needs' to a higher level with fancy stitches handed down through the years but still always thinking, "Who Needs....?" (GS)

I appreciate the art of knitting. my husband started this. Thinking by telling me it is an art and I am an artist (CC2)





Never let anyone crush your creativity. What you stitch, comes from your heart, and no one can take that from you. Stitch on my friend. (KR)

#### *4.4.4.4 The Joy of Stash*

I love the word stash - it makes me think that there is plenty of choice and it is waiting for me to use it. I know I love what I have as I have chosen it. (PK)

Although stash has long been the term used for the big pile of paper, yarn and fabric in my upstairs craft room, I have never really liked it - it sounds like a selfish or hoarding term, and I think knitters, crocheters, crafters are very willing to share with people who also value the raw materials of our trade. It isn't that we are hoarding, we are collecting something we love. I would much rather refer to it as my yarn treasure, or some other term that has less negative judgment attached. (SN)

Yarn would have been highly prized by our ancestors and no doubt literally hoarded. This is just an awakening of that survival state. Women with wool were winners! (JB4)

I love the word 'stash' too. To me it is like a buffer, I have it in case, for some strange reason, I am unable to get any more yarn for example - zombie apocalypse, all the yarn shops close down, there is a world wide shortage of sheep, etc. (MR)

I don't mind the word stash, but I like the word treasure trove better. I think it is good for women to have their own space to be creative. We all need an outlet for ourselves. (EB)

I could not agree more, we women need a space for ourselves, be it for our Yoga, our knitting reading, beading or what ever we like to do. Men have their 'man caves,' we need our space too. I keep my stash in a very large tub in the bedroom. Then some of it (sometimes quite a log of it) migrates downstairs when it is under consideration for another project to start. (AO)

I have no problem with the word stash. I have never felt guilty about buying/spending on yarn as most is for gifting. I have never felt the need to hide or smuggle my yarn in to the house. My husband knows where all my yarn is as does my sons ... They know



that this is Mom's "thing" and respect it. It has never interfered with my caring for them at any time. (AW3)

I call my yarn by many names: stash, trove, or simply The Collection ... I do feel guilty at times about how much i have, usually because I already have the same yarn I just purchased more of. I vow to get better at this. (KW3)

## 4.6 “FIBER CANNOT FIX EVERYTHING”: THE ‘DARK SIDE’ OF KNITTING FOR WELLBEING

### 4.5.1 Physical Pain

I'm already in so much pain it's the only thing that distracts from it even if it causes a little more... (JM)

I do have trigger thumb and arthritis in general in my hands (and feet and knee and....). If I knit for too long my thumb will ache but the sense of achievement and distraction from TV makes the occasional physical pain worth it. (KS)

For me it doesn't eliminate my pain (Polymyalgia Rheumatica, like fibro but with extreme inflammation as well as pain). But it does keep me distracted which is pretty much the same thing. Plus a high of completing projects or thinking of the person it is for gets my mind off of myself. (SP)

I've had three lots of surgery on my right hand in the last three years, and was determined to keep knitting throughout, however slowly. I ended up continental knitting domino squares with a needle shoved down my cast, just to keep myself sane ... I found that it was crochet that really set up inflammation for me, so I've learned to limit it, and opt for knitting with bamboo/birch pins. I've had carpal tunnel decompression ops on both hands, and three lots of rummaging about on my right hand due to arthritis (JG)

My hand, elbows and shoulders determine which I can work on that day (DB)



Having fibromyalgia and Osteoarthritis makes crocheting a challenge sometimes for me. I feel like i benchpressed a house after a particularly long period of crocheting ... if i could find a way to use it for pain management I would be one happy hooker!! (KB)

“Knitting and crochet can cause pain if I sit too long. I longed for retirement so that I could knit and sew all day - fat chance. Knitting and crochet got my left hand moving again after a stroke, slowly but surely, but I can only knit, crochet or sew for so long ... I try to work through it but only make errors, so not worth persevering.” (GD)

“I've got dupuytren's started in my crochet hand maybe that's why it's so painful. I also have had cervical spine surgery because neck disc de.generation was affecting my arm. Sadly after 5 years symptoms are returning. Floods of tears here” (AR)

I'm sure it's because the bamboo ones flex slightly as you use them, they move with your hands, whereas the steel ones fight back. Try a pair, you have nothing to lose except the pain (AD)

I do chair yoga when I'm on a knitting binge due to poor planning requiring marathon knitting to meet a deadline. It makes a world of difference. A physical therapist told me that nearly every knitter or crocheter will hunch their shoulders up toward their ears when they get intent on their work. This causes all kinds of structural and muscular problems in the shoulders, neck, biceps and upper chest. As well as headaches. (DB)

Sorry you're in pain, hope the meds kick in soon, pain is such a mood hoover, big hugs x x (DJ)

Your beautiful words touch me so much and giving the affirmation that pain is pain, suffering is suffering. (IM)

#### 4.5.2 Emotional Pain

Words alone cannot express the grief and sorrow we feel for you (GS)

Crocheting in the clouds. Rest in Peace (SH)

it's so sad that [name] who brought such joy to others, through her blog and crochet, should suffer so much. And so many others, just clinging on. (NM)



Deeply sad, I know all too well what it's like to be in that much pain xx (JB3)

This week has shown that when you are in that dark place of depression even with loved one around you, sometimes you don't have the strength to ask for help. We all need to be mindful that underneath a smile or happy words there maybe a heart who's breaking. (SH)

I have been unwell recently and have still not yet come to terms with what has happened to me so much so that i haven't been interest one bit in either crochet or knitting, I just haven't been able to settle to anything. I think for me crochet/knitting can help me to relax and switch off from life's mundane irritations but somehow it hasn't helped me at all through what has essentially been a life changing experience and that has surprised me because in the past I automatically reach for my crochet to help to "switch off" from stuff happening. (AN3)

I am recovering from cancer. Everyone says knitting/crocheting is great for recovery. For me, I could not knit or crochet. There just was no energy and no ability to focus. (WL)

“Dark blue... constant, consistent fog... When I'm truly medically depressed I generally don't work on anything. Otherwise I usually work from the same subdued rainbow color palette ... Hahahaa. I haven't noticed color can make me feel better when working with it, but some colors can aggravate me, especially the self-striping sock yarn. But I think much of that is on OCD issue when the color changes don't line up just right it makes m a little crazy.” (DB)

#### *4.5.2.1 Distress*

making something simple allows my mind to dwell on negative thoughts still.” (MR)

I should really try a little more mindfulness! I'm not very good at being in the moment, I always seem to be worrying about the next thing that I need to do/get to! I do relax when I'm knitting but it has to have a finished aim otherwise I find it very stressful. (GS2)

I struggle to crochet if really down as I feel the negative feelings go into the item I'm working on. (MR)



I fell in love with it and crocheted at any chance I could. Then it stalled. It got too big to take out and about ... Then I had a bit of an issue with the person I making it for and I felt I would be crocheting in my negative mood and I couldn't contemplate giving a blanket made in anger (MF)

For some, on some days, fiber cannot fix everything. When I get into a very bad place, I am aware that if I'm knitting, crocheting or stitching I can find myself in a very bad cycle of negative self-talking ... If I still find the chatter in my head too loud I have to put the handwork down and find something else to distract it. Usually that will involve another person in some form of communication. Handwork helps. But it is not a panacea. (DB)

Still not worthy ... acceptance is a big part of why I post and talk on the groups, now I wanna cry and I do not know how to tell the hubby yet (KC2)

Today knitting is not good for me. After a night shift I decided to do a few rows ... Thinking I'd knitted the whole section incorrectly, I groaned and called myself a few choice names, before unravelling around 50 rows of perfectly correct knitting. Picked up my pattern after picking up the stitches and realised my mistake. .... Aaggghhhhhh!!!!!! I am going to sleep now. I may not pick up my knitting for a few days (BB)

Big source of anxiety and frustration with all my unfinished projects ... I am a highly anxious person ... Big projects also give me an anxious feeling because since they take so long to complete I don't feel the satisfaction of a completed product and get that sensation as I would with something that I could finish faster, so then I feel more frustrated. (AN)

#### *4.5.2.2 Loneliness*

I am isolated as such, I think (HF)

I'm very lonely! Ha ha!!(CW2)

Yes, at times I feel lonely when working on a project. The lonely feeling tends to hir [*sic*: higher?] when all my friends or family members are asleep I have odd hours (KW3)



I love knitting/crocheting alone. It gives me the moments of peace I need to keep my anxiety at bay. But there are times I wish I had a few friends to knit with - it does get a bit lonely (BC2)

It can help to push loneliness away but conversely it can also bring the loneliness into focus (GC)

My relationship with my family is contentious ... But I know that the handiwork that they taught me is "in the blood" and it gives me some comfort that if not this previous generation, I am connected thru craft to many who came before in my family's history... I don't know if you can have muscle memory or learned skills passed down genetically but it feels that way (SP)

My mother and my Grandmother both were expert needlewomen (sewing/crochet/lacemaking) but neither cared to teach or encourage my sister and I. I am growing a strong bond with my 23yr old daughter as we learn from each other (JB4)

No one in my family, immediate or extended, is crafty or creative so I often feel even more separated from them because I'm the only one. I plan on teaching my kids how to crochet, knit ... and anything else I pick up until then. I want them to have something to help reduce anxiety, express themselves, and share with each other and me to strengthen our family. I really want to be able to pass on what I know with everyone actually (ME)

#### 4.5.2.3. Self-doubt and Self-criticism

I seem to have lost my mojo. My Ravelry library and queue are full of ideas and I have lots of great yarn in my stash but nothing is jumping out saying "MAKE ME!" Do any of you get like this? (DS)

I am in between starting a wip but cannot decide on what to start. It is like a limbo stage for me when you finally finish something and want to start a new one but at a loss as to what to start and get into. (JG3)

I have a stack of Wip's that I can't motivate myself to look at, let alone finish (MR)



I find my mind is always miles ahead of my body...at times I have soooo many ideas running through my head I almost feel giddy :-)) but as my body has a mind of its own due to my spinal problems I'm not able to keep up...now that frustrates me. (RB)

Maybe it's me and not you at all, but I feel that we may soon have to agree to go our separate ways. I have tried everything I can think of - I have frogged you on more occasions than I would care to mention, I have counted and recounted stitches and can still make no sense of what is going on. The pattern is not difficult, but for some reason we just don't seem to work together, we no longer agree about anything and it is becoming a constant battle to get on with you. I thought maybe if we took a break from each other, that things would settle down and we would be able to work out our differences but sadly I fear that this is not the case. I am willing to give us one more go ... but, unfortunately, I think we may have to bid each other a not so fond adieu. (MR)

After 40+ I could have remembered some of this then – back in the 70s I picked this up after I recovered from back surgery. Apparently not. So when I be.g.an again after so many years... my brain's file cabinet opened in the night and information slipped out (or was misfiled)" (LG)

#### *4.5.2.4 The Pain of Stash*

I am a yarnaholic and have my stash everywhere in the house! I have never smuggled any yarn into the house nor tried to hide it, but have endured many comments from family members saying enough is enough! (CF)

I don't necessarily hide it, but I also don't flaunt it...my husband has his own hobbies that also cost quite a lot. I think we share pic of our stash as a from of relief - I'm not the only one! That woman has muuuuuch more! (CP3)

I do have to smuggle stash into the house sometimes as OH doesn't always approve! I don't object to the word stash, i think it reflects my perception of it as a collection, but one that is the tools and resources to create wonderful things. I like looking at pictures of other people's stashes too, I feel jealous but in a good way if that makes sense? (JW)

Yesterday I was about to pay for a yarn order on the internet when my husband came home very early, he must have thought I was watching porn or getting drugs...I blushed





and stuttered! I have it sent to my work and keep it in the boot of my car till my day off! Then I squirrel it away, I don't know why in all other things I am really open, it is definitely a guilty pleasure! (AF)

I have a huge stash and mostly I am ashamed as it is a bit like those people how have their lives out of control and hoard stuff (RP)

I was hoping my knitting room (conservatory) would be a little less stressful after having it all neatly put away but as you can see there are lots more on top. All this makes me so overwhelmed that i feel sick, so am trying to knit my way through my stash but i find when i knit i am not enjoying it that much as i know i am trying to do it to lessen my yarn and get caught up with that thought rather than enjoying the project i am doing, i think i have a problem. (LD)

I don't hide it but I try not to let my husband notice when I get more. Like throwing away receipts and burying them in my totes. He doesn't know the difference. But it's exploding near the front door out of the tote into boxes and bags. It's a mess. It actually hurts my creativity because it looks overwhelming to me at times. (SB)



## APPENDIX 10b

### EXPANDED ILLUSTRATIVE EVIDENCE – IMAGES



## Celebration

*Image posted by AA2*



*Image posted by KC*



*Image posted by AN*



*Image posted by SH*



*Image posted by AM*







## Gifts

*Image posted by MI*



*Image posted by AM2*



*Image posted by DJ*



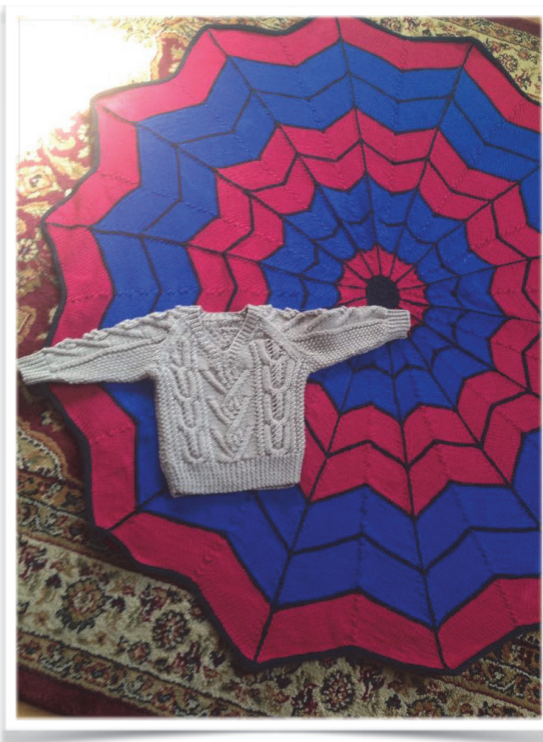
*Image posted by CR2*







*Image posted by CC2*



*Image posted by GS*



*Image posted by VH*





Home

*Image posted by CF2*



*Image posted by KM*



*Image posted by AN2*



*Image posted by JS4*



*Image posted by RP*







*Image posted by SK2*

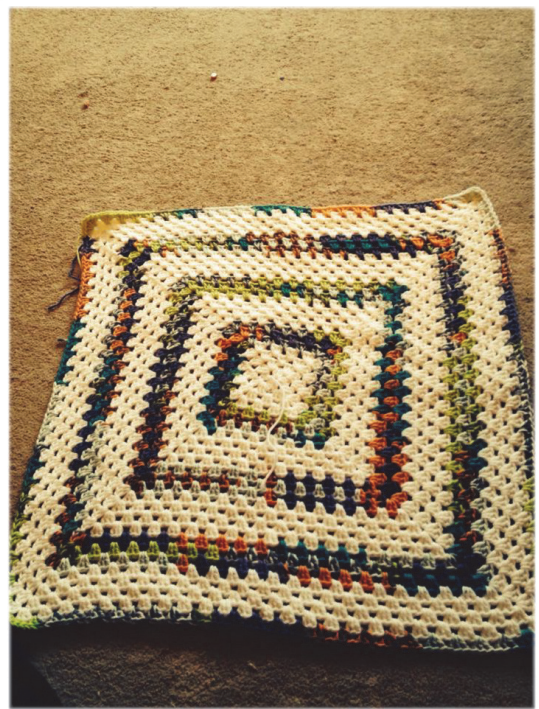


## Seeking Help

*Image posted by LM2*



*Image posted by DJ*







*Image posted by CW*



*Image posted by SB*



*Image posted by JS3*



*Image posted by MI*



## Stash

*Image posted by CT*



*Image posted by WP*







*Image posted by JM4*



*Image posted by RP*



*Image posted by LD*



*Image posted by PG*







## Work in Progress

*Image posted by HB*



*Image posted by JM*



*Image posted by CB*



*Image posted by KW*



*Image posted by LJ*





*Image posted by AH*





## From THE KNITTER

*By Jackie Kay*

*I knitted to begin again: Lay on, sweerie geng.*

*Takkin my makkin everywhere I gang.*

*Een and een. Twin pins. My good head.*

*A whole life of casting on, casting off*

*Like the North Sea. I watch wave after wave,*

*plain and purl, casting on, casting off.*

*I watch the ferries coming back, going away.*

*Time is a loop stitch. I knit to keep death away.*

*(Kay, 2006)*

